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PARADISE OF BACHELORS LP / CD

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TERRY ALLEN AND THE PANHANDLE MYSTERY BAND
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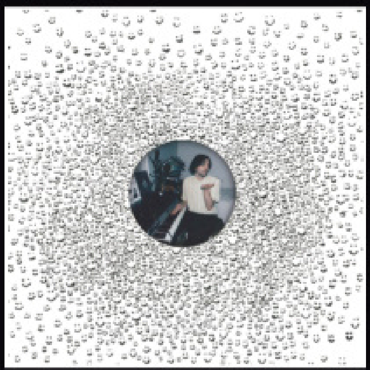
If these walls of the Sage Motel could talk, this is what they’d say. So join us as we examine where the stories are told and experiences unfold.....and sink into a soft pillow of soulful psychedelia.....down at the Sage Motel.



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Astrel K is the Stockholm based, solo project of Rhys Edwards [Ulrika Spacek]. ‘Flickering i’ is a debut album inspired, equally, by vintage library albums and 60s pop.

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Timothy Gane [Stereolab / Cavern of Anti-Matter] and Jeremy Novak [Dymaxion] are Ghost Power. This is their debut album - 10 tracks of melodic, electronic bliss.

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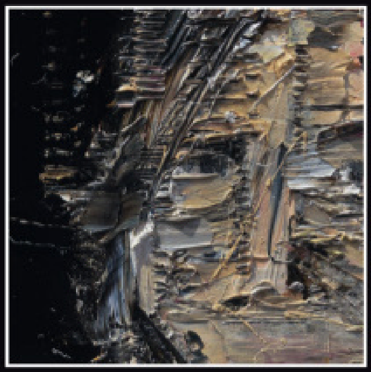

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SARGENT HOUSE LP / CD

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LABELLE’S PATTI LaBELLE, P56

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60 GRATEFUL DEAD When America’s Freaks-in-Chief toured Europe in 1972, they were a drummer short and with one founder member ailing. But their legendary shows transcended all.

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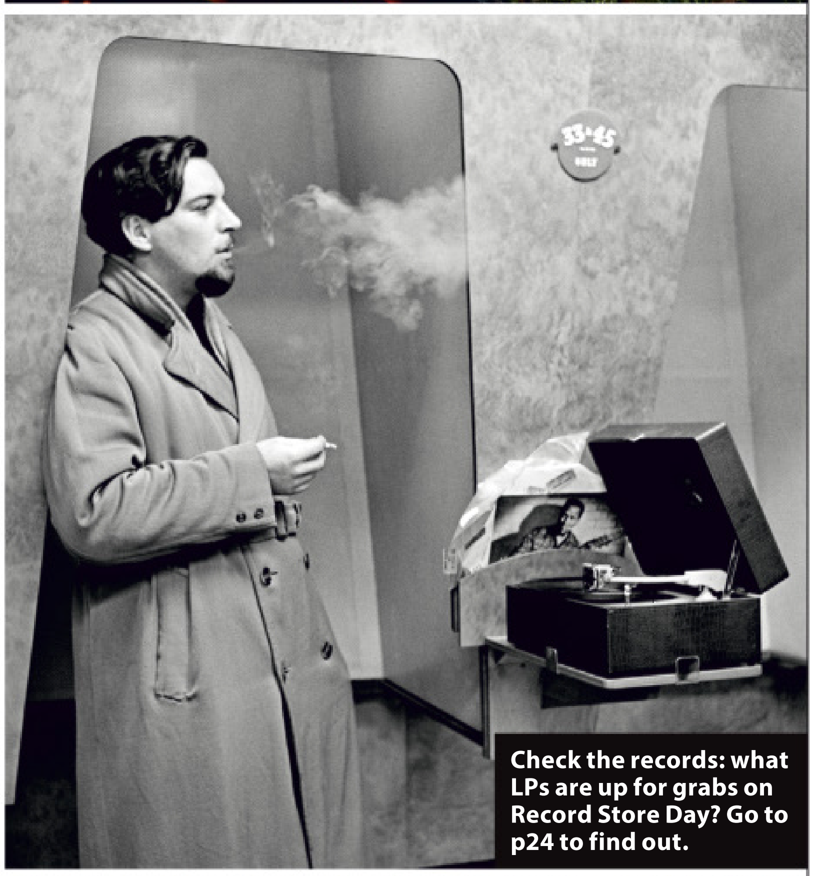
Getty

All fired up: Jon Spencer, Albums, p91.



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112 REAL GONE Taylor Hawkins, Timmy Thomas, Don Craine, Nicky Tesco and many more, goodnight.

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26 ABDUL 'DUKE' FAKIR As he prepares to release his autobiography and to tour again, the last Four Top standing reflects on a lifetime of close harmonising, the joys of a long apprenticeship and meeting Cab Calloway.

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82 NEW ALBUMS Mick Head heads to the Hills, plus Oumou Sangaré and Kevin Morby.

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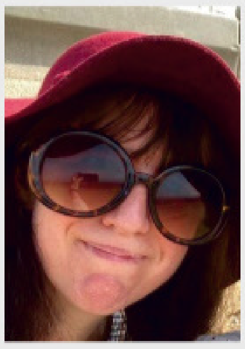


Lois Wilson

"A genuine thrill," is how Lois, who has been writing for MOJO since 1999, describes the experience of talking to Patti LaBelle and Nona Hendryx about Labelle's pioneering *Nightbirds* this month. She also bids farewell to Timmy Thomas and navigates Gil Scott-Heron's back catalogue in How To Buy.

Ted Kessler

This month's cover story is a rematch between Ted and Liam Gallagher – who first met in 1994, when the Gallaghers visited NME on promo business and five hours later ended up in a bundle with greasers in Camden's Underworld. For more tales of Ted's adventures in the music press, his book Paper Cuts is published July 21.

Jim Irvin

"Mighty Baby had a strong connection that made their music special, and they speak of one another with great warmth," says Jim, who talked to the band's surviving members for our feature on p38. Jim regularly asks people about their favourite underrated albums on his splendid podcast, You're Not On The List.

Michael Lavine, Getty, Vince McIndoe

WET LEG
the debut album
out now
Domino

Grateful Dead

From The Bay To The Pool
Live 1971-1978

1 Truckin' 10:00

"Some very good friends of ours and yours – the Grateful Dead!" That's promoter Bill Graham summoning the band on-stage at the Fillmore East, and kicking off this very special MOJO collection of Dead nuggets. And where better to start than with this rousing catalogue of on-the-road highs and lows? Note the line "Busted down on Bourbon Street", a reference to the band being arrested in New Orleans 14 months earlier.

Written by Garcia/Weir/Lesh/Hunter. Published by Ice Nine Publishing Co., Inc. (ASCAP) ℗&©2000 Grateful Dead Productions. From *Ladies And Gentlemen… The Grateful Dead*

2 Cumberland Blues 5:47

There are plenty of reasons why the Dead's tour of Europe in 1972 has become so legendary, many of which are explored in depth from page 60. Here's compelling musical evidence, though: an intricate, high-velocity choogle through Cumberland Blues from *Workingman's Dead*, recorded on the first night of the tour at the Empire Pool, Wembley. Listen out for some spectacular barrelhousing from new pianist Keith Godchaux.

Written by Garcia/Lesh/Hunter. Published by Ice Nine Publishing Co., Inc. (ASCAP) ℗&©2011 Grateful Dead Productions. From *Europe '72*

3 Friend Of The Devil 4:10

As the '70s dawned, the Dead shifted a little away from psychedelic new frontiers and towards the myths of the Old Weird America – never more so than on this outlaw myth concocted by the band's chief lyricist, Robert Hunter. This fine, shuffling take also dates from 1972, at the Fox Theatre in St Louis, and is plucked from the *Listen To The River* box set that arrived in late 2021.

Written by Garcia/Dawson/Hunter. Published by Ice Nine Publishing Co., Inc. (ASCAP) ℗&©2021 Grateful Dead Productions. From *Listen To The River: St. Louis '71 '72 '73*

4 Samson And Delilah 9:00

The old blues spiritual entered the Dead's repertoire in 1976, when Bob Weir learned it from a 1960 recording by the Reverend Gary Davis. Weir's energy pulses through this New Year's Eve 1978 version, back home in San Francisco for the closing night of the Winterland Arena. Search out Bob Dylan's 2004 live Samson And Delilah on YouTube, which owes not a little to Weir and the Dead's arrangement.

Trad. arr. By Weir Published by Ice Nine Publishing Co., Inc. (ASCAP) ℗&©2003 Grateful Dead Productions. From *The Closing Of Winterland*

6 Bertha 5:53

A second highlight of the Europe '72 jaunt, from night four in Copenhagen, and another Dead classic that didn't ever surface in the studio. Besides being a critical part of their gigs for a quarter century, Bertha also fed into a significant piece of the band's iconography. The familiar skeleton, wearing a crown of roses, by designers Stanley Mouse and Alton Kelley, eventually became known as Bertha – you can admire her on this month's CD.

Written by Garcia/Hunter. Published by Ice Nine Publishing Co., Inc. (ASCAP) ℗&©2011 Grateful Dead Productions. From *Europe '72 Vol. 2*

7 Wharf Rat 8:31

The Bertha skeleton also manifested on the cover of 1971's eponymous live set, often referred to by fans as Skull & Roses or the band's own working title, Skullfuck. The chiming elegy of Wharf Rat, a tale of a homeless wanderer called August West, made its debut on there, too. A decade later, alcohol and drug-free Deadheads – many of them recovered addicts – would convene at gigs under the banner of the Wharf Rats.

Written by Garcia/Hunter Published by Ice Nine Publishing Co., Inc. (ASCAP) ℗&©1971, 2021 Warner Records Inc. From *Grateful Dead (Skull & Roses)*

8 Uncle John's Band 8:18

Another New Year's Eve in the Bay Area. In the earliest hours of 1977, some three hours after the show began, a seven-strong Dead dust down this gentle anthem from *Workingman's Dead*. Listen for Donna Jean Godchaux in the vocal mix; the Muscle Shoals singer's pre-Dead career included backing vocals on Elvis Presley's Suspicious Minds.

Written by Garcia/Hunter Published by Ice Nine Publishing Co., Inc. (ASCAP) ℗&©2007 Grateful Dead Productions. From *Live At The Cow Palace, New Year's Eve, 1976*

9 Casey Jones 6:25

Not the old American folk song about a railroad engineer, but Garcia and Hunter's own rethink of the tale. The singalong, runaway train groover from *Workingman's Dead* became one of their most popular songs. This version, like its spiritual twin Truckin', comes from the run of April '71 shows that were compiled on *Ladies And Gentlemen…*; an especially soulful lead vocal from Garcia, for good measure.

Written by Garcia/Hunter Published by Ice Nine Publishing Co., Inc. (ASCAP) ℗&©2000 Grateful Dead Productions. From *Ladies And Gentlemen… The Grateful Dead*

Getty

WHERE TO BEGIN WITH THE GRATEFUL DEAD, THE MOST beloved and daunting of great American rock bands? The extraordinary depth of their catalogue can be intimidating to newcomers, even as Deadheads vigorously debate the individual merits of, say, every gig the band played on their spring tour of Europe, 1972.

Don't worry, readers – MOJO's got your back. This month, with the invaluable help of Rhino Records, the Grateful Dead organisation and the band's official archivist David Lemieux, we present *From The Bay To The Pool*, an essential primer of the Dead's '70s live manoeuvres. The Bay refers to the San Francisco area, of course, and there's plenty of action on the Dead's home turf. The Pool is the Empire Pool in London, where that storied European tour began 50 years ago this month. Along the way, Lemieux has selected exceptional live versions of 10 key Dead songs, leaning into the rambunctious cosmic Americana that propelled them through the early '70s and beyond. Curious new adventurers would do well to start here; veteran fans will still find plenty to treasure. Together, more or less in line, let's all just keep truckin' on…

5 BROWN-EYED WOMEN 5:49

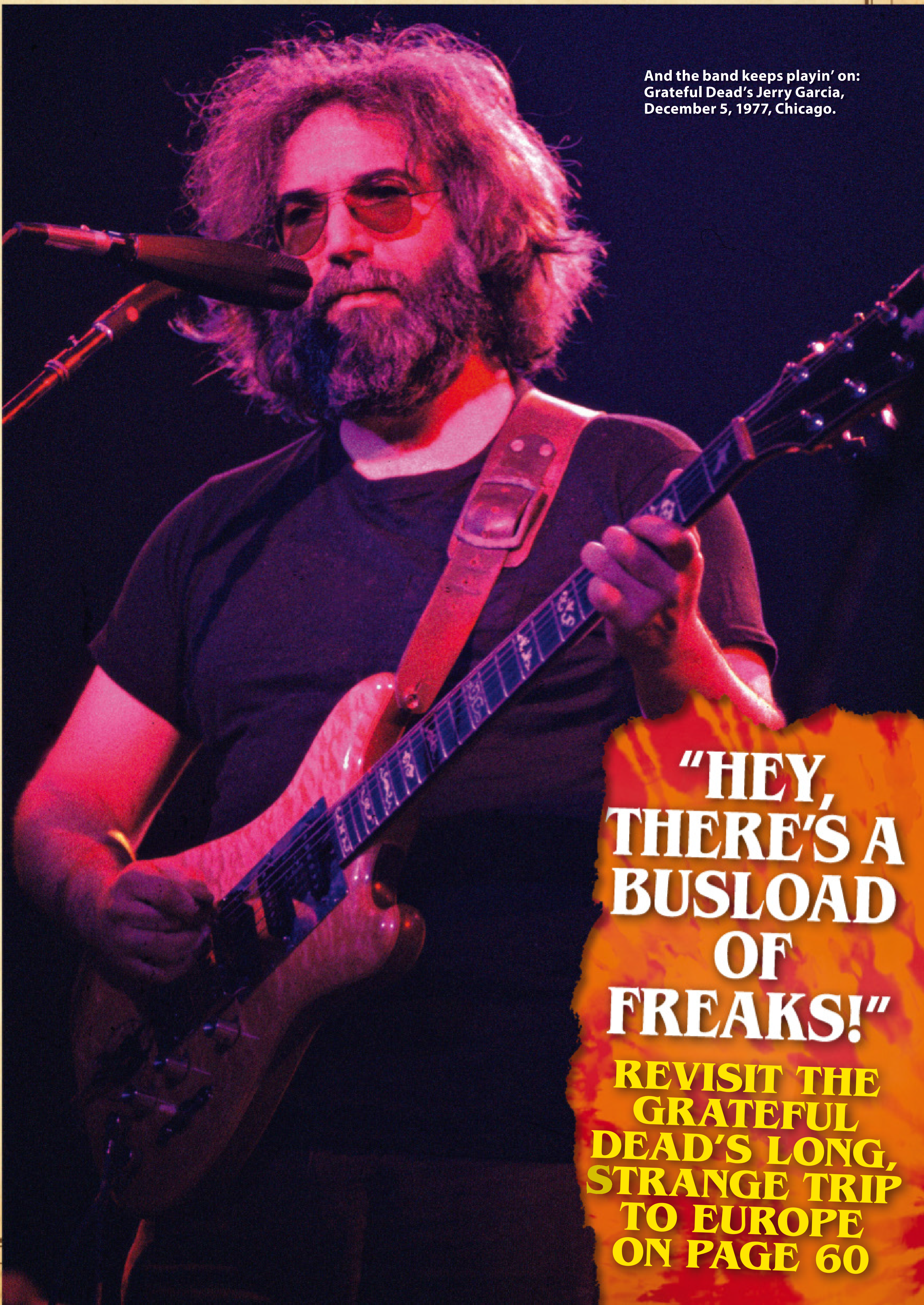
Deadheads will merrily argue for days about the greatest GD show. If a consensus ever emerges, it often forms around this show from May 8, 1977 at Cornell University in upstate New York. Lyrical, elaborate jams abound, but there's also room for tight and zingy versions of songs like Brown-Eyed Women, one of the finest Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter tunes that, incredibly, never made it onto a Dead studio album.

Written by Garcia/Hunter Published by Ice Nine Publishing Co., Inc. (ASCAP) ℗&©2017 Grateful Dead Productions. From *Cornell 5/8/77*

10 THE MUSIC NEVER STOPPED 5:29

A fitting closer, from the songbook of Bob Weir and his regular lyricist John Perry Barlow. This rather funky version comes from 1991's *One From The Vault*, the LP that initiated the still on-going avalanche of archive sets. Take it from Weir: "Old men sing about their dreams/Women laugh and children scream/And the band keeps playin' on…"

Written by Weir/Barlow Published by Ice Nine Publishing Co., Inc. (ASCAP) ℗&©2000 Grateful Dead Productions. From *One From The Vault 1975*



And the band keeps playin' on: Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia, December 5, 1977, Chicago.

"HEY, THERE'S A BUSLOAD OF FREAKS!"
REVISIT THE GRATEFUL DEAD'S LONG, STRANGE TRIP TO EUROPE ON PAGE 60

50 YEARS OF TODD RUNDGREN'S
SOMETHING/ ANYTHING?
JOIN THE NATION OF FANS AT SA50.ROCKS:
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FRONT ROW DARLENE ANGELL ANTHONY ANZIVINO MARILYN BAIRD SUE BARRY GRETA BARTHOLOMEW BRUCE BENNETT JAY BLOOMROSEN CATHY LEE BRANDSTETTER BILL BRICKER JERRY CALDWELL & CYNTHIA GRAY AL CANNON MARCIA CASTRO JOSH CHASIN EILEEN CLARK NANCY COCHRANE JOLYNNE COUNTER BOB CRAIN ANDREA DAVIS KATHY DERWIN REGINA DORFMEYER JULIE DYE MONICA EAKIN MARY BETH EARLY TOM EISNER CHRIS GARAY ELLEN GASKILL KAREN GIOCONDI JENNY GREEN VALERIE HALE PETER RISBY HANSEN BOB & BARB HEYDORN ROGER HIORNS CHRISTY HOFFKNECHT THOMAS & STEPHANIE HOUSTON DREW TAMAKI & CONNIE IBRAHIM DENISE JAMES THOM JENNINGS DON & CATHY JOHNSON HARRY JONES MARCI KAPLAN RUTH KARCH MIKE KATSMAN KEITH KAUFMAN JULIE KOKRDA JEANETTE KOUSTENIS PATRICIA KWERAM PAMMIE LEEK DINA LONGO LESLIE LOPARDO MARYANNE LUSTIG KEVIN MACH LINDA MACKOV ANTHONY MCGARRIGLE TIM & KIM MINER GRADY MOATES WILLIAM MURPHY GORDON MYERS LORI MYERS GARRY NORDENSTAM JOEL & VICKI OWENS TOM. E PALMER LISA PERCIAVALLE DEANNA PETERSON CHERI PIASECKI DODE PRICKETT RON PROBST JOHN RACCIO IN MEMORY OF CHERYL RAYDEN IN MEMORY OF RUTH RUNDGREN SUSAN RUSSO TERRY SAFRANEK KATHRYN SAUERS ELISE LENORE SCHMIDT MARK SHALLIN SCOTT & SHERYL SHEPPARD SAM & TERI SHILLING IN MEMORY OF LARRY SHIMERKA CAROLYN SIDDALL CHARLOTTE SMITH MITCH & SEAN SONODA IN MEMORY OF COLLIN JANET SPAHR PATRICIA STANTON LINDA STEFANIK DANA STEIN DAVID STEIN DAVID SUBLESKI GAIL SUNSHINE-MAY TRACE TEDRICK JIM UTOPIA TINA VOGT FRANCIS VOORHIES RON WAYDA TODD WAYNE DEBORAH WHITE MELISSA WILSON SHERRI WROBELL
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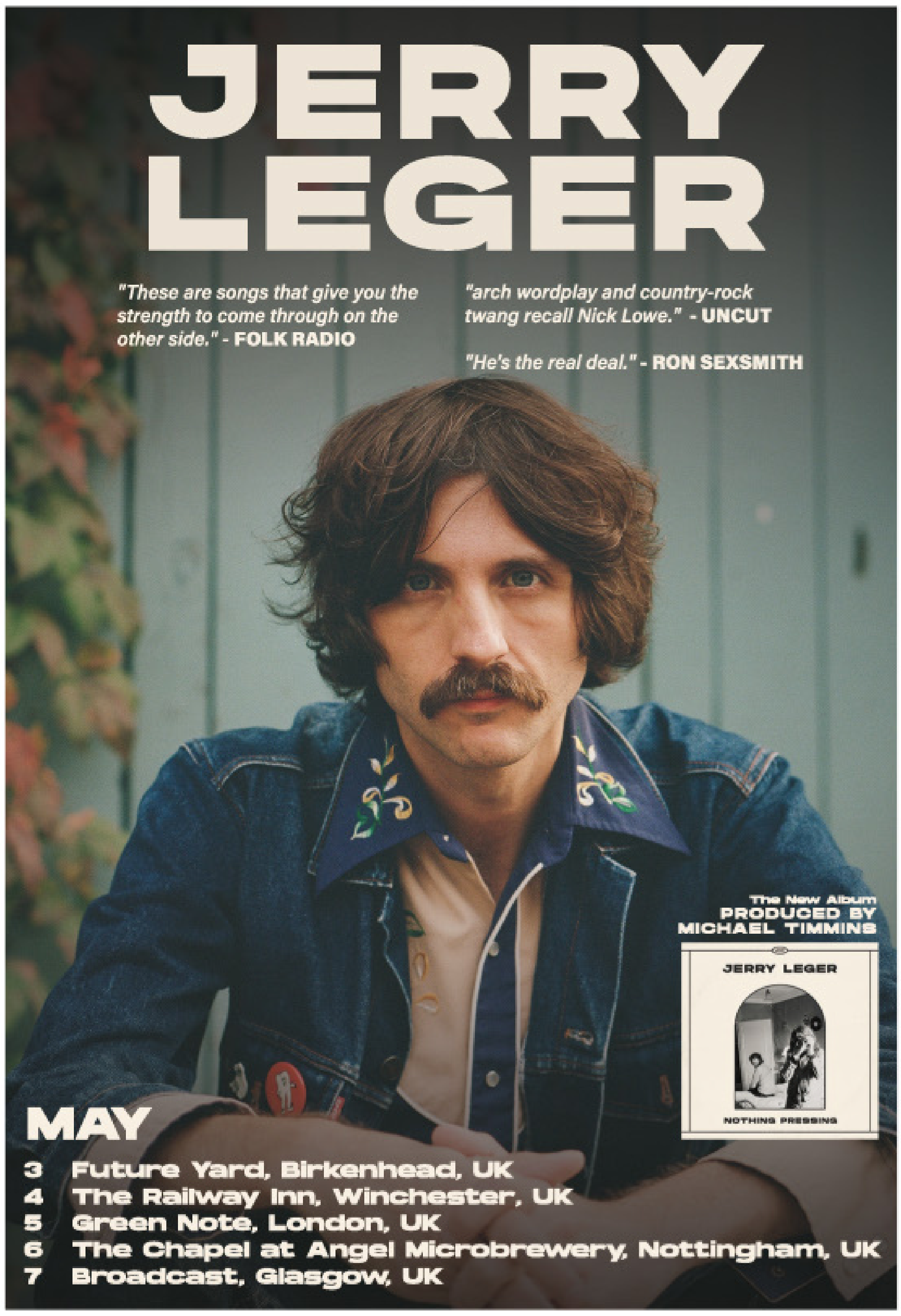
JERRY LEGER
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Fatoumata Diawara

MALI BLUESER

What music are you currently grooving to?
A lot of traditional music, music from my roots, music from my region of Wassoulou. I'm also listening to lots of old songs from Mali. I love listening to the old grooves and the old voices. They really inspire me. Especially the voices of Malian women.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?
Nina Simone's *The Very Best Of…* I always get inspiration from her.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?
In Mali I couldn't buy a record because of my background, so the first record I bought was Nina Simone's best-of when I came to Paris. When I got my freedom, leaving my family to run away and come to Europe, she was the first voice that I heard. She supported me mentally and her music encouraged me to keep my own voice as it is, because when I started to sing I was trying to sing like European people. I've been listening to her ever since.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?
It would be **Ali Farka Touré**. I'd want to keep Ali Farka Touré's style, but not be an exact copy, be myself too.

What do you sing in the shower?
I love singing songs in the shower, but I also like to write songs in the shower. The sound of the water is very inspiring for writing melodies.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?
Women singing jazz and blues – **Ella Fitzgerald**, **Billie Holiday**, Nina Simone.

And your Sunday morning record?
Could be jazz, classical… and I love the songs of my ancestors. You have to dig deep to find recordings, but I love listening to these old songs.

Fatoumata's new LP Maliba is available digitally now.

ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING…

Billy Childish

BATTLER OF MEDWAY

What music are you currently grooving to?
Today, when I was painting, The Early Music Show on Radio 3, it was (*looks it up*) 'A Celebration Of The 450th Anniversary Of The Birth Of The Composer **Thomas Tomkins**.' It sounded sort of like somebody keying into some spiritual, ritual element of himself in nature. But I'd never heard of him until today, and I won't remember him tomorrow.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?
An impossible question. I'll say **Robert Johnson**, *King Of The Delta Blues Singers*. But if you ask me in 10 minutes it would be different.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?
Strawberry Fields, from Boots in Chatham. It was a bit like when I first heard **Jimi Hendrix** in '67, it sounded like it could almost be power drills it sounded so weird, like when people first went to the cinema and thought the train on the screen was going to run them over.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?
When I was a kid, Jimi Hendrix, because of my intense sort of emotional feeling about him.

What do you sing in the shower?
Things I'm working on. Oh, Julie [Mrs Childish, speaking offstage] said I sing Grizzly Bear, the work song.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?
Ramones, **Doors**, early **Kinks**, early **Rolling Stones**, early **Bob Dylan**, early **Who**, **Jimmy Reed**, **Bo Diddley**, early **Ike** and **Tina**, **Janis Joplin** doing Ball And Chain at Monterey, **Wilson Pickett**, **Billie Holiday**. I've been known to, like, possibly dance to Jimmy Reed, otherwise I probably don't move.

And your Sunday morning record?
Music on a Sunday morning, what do you think this place is? We don't listen to music on a Sunday morning. Julie does, she has playlists. She likes all sorts of nonsense, 'Classic Rock' she calls it. Ha ha! She's giving me the finger, she's American.

The William Loveday Intention's The Baptiser is out now; Paralysed By The Mountains is released on April 29 (both Damaged Goods).

Aida Muluneh, Alison Wonderland

Mike Scott

THE WATERBOY'S BACK IN TOWN

What music are you currently grooving to?
Daddy's Home by **St. Vincent**. I'm in awe of the writing, the singing, the sound sculpture, the guitar playing, the lyrics. And it's fabulously mixed, dirty, sexy, unpredictable; everything great rock music should be.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?
Sticky Fingers. And my favourite track is Wild Horses. That one's as close as Mick comes to compassionate, and where he leaves off, Keith's lead guitar takes it all the way. I love the orchestral arrangements on Sway and Moonlight Mile too. Don't usually think of the **Stones** with strings, but it works great.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?
Last Night In Soho by **Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick & Tich**. Eight shillings and threepence-ha'penny from Boots on Princes Street, Edinburgh, summer of '68.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?
That prince among men, **Charlie Watts**. And these days, **Taylor Swift**. The world's at her feet, talent and songs are pouring out of her, she has wisdom beyond her years and control of her destiny.

> "I'm in awe of St. Vincent's *Daddy's Home*."
> MIKE SCOTT

What do you sing in the shower?
Whatever new song I'm working on.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?
Mad Dogs & Englishmen by **Joe Cocker**. Favourite moment is when Leon Russell hits the piano reprise on Delta Lady and the band crashes back in. And after the closing rally he hits it again. And they crash in again. I wish it went on forever. Maybe in some parallel universe it does.

And your Sunday morning record?
I'm no Christian, man, but it's gotta be Soon As I Get Home by **The Thomas Whitfield Company**, a gospel choir out of Detroit in the 1980s. The spirituality, like all great gospel or sacred music, transcends separate notions of religion.

The Waterboys' All Souls Hill is released on Cooking Vinyl on May 6.

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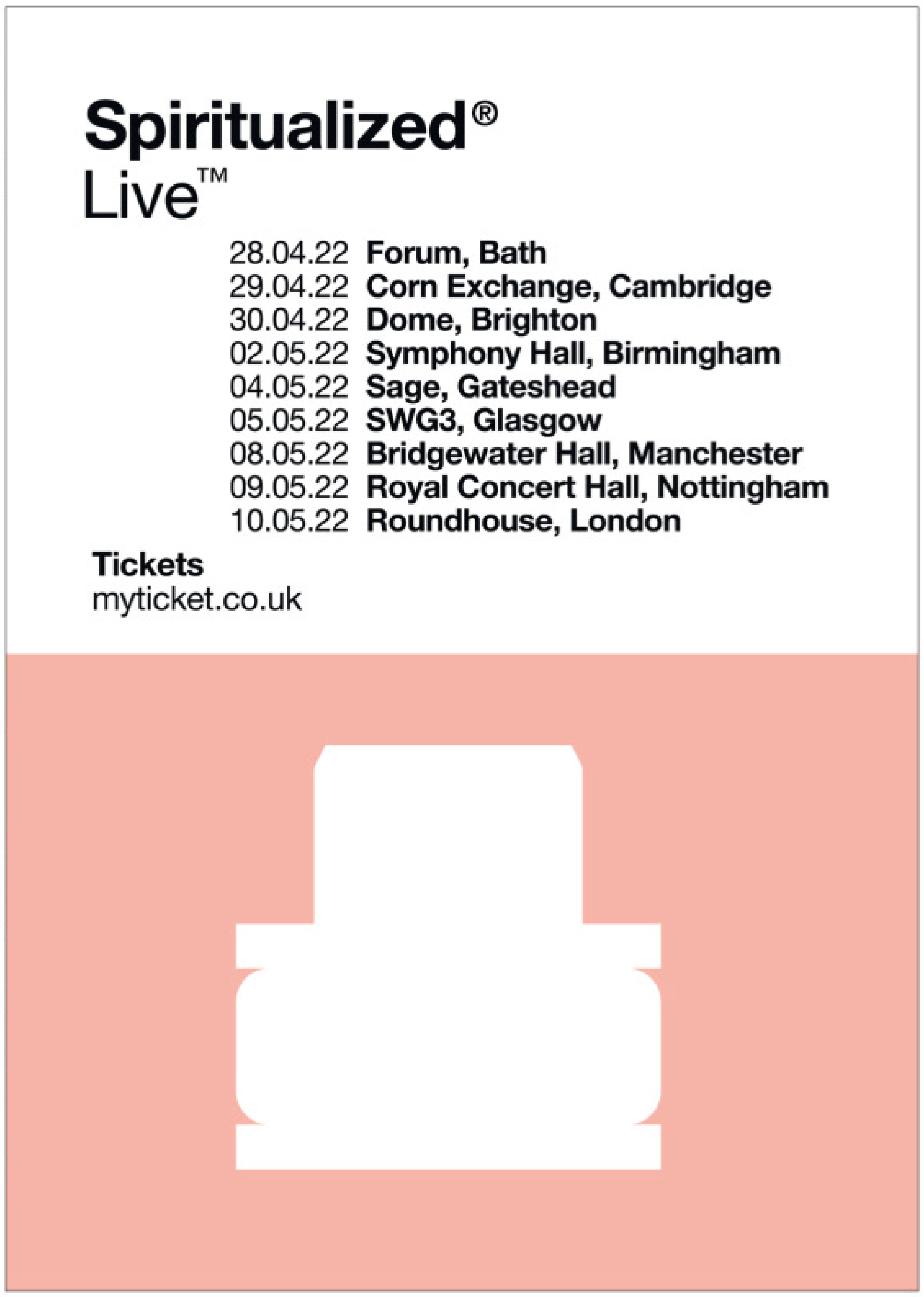
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Theories, rants, etc.

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IT HAS, ASTONISHINGLY, BEEN 334 ISSUES since Liam Gallagher first loped into the pages of MOJO. Jim Irvin, still on our team, spots him fronting Oasis at London's Marquee club in the summer of 1994, "Impassively cocksure, quietly convinced of [his] roughly distilled essence of Everything Rock Delights In." "Our kid's not got the faintest idea what's going on," Noel Gallagher tells Jim later. "He'll be one of the greats because he doesn't know."

Twenty-eight years later, Liam Gallagher is nudging 50, seemingly in need of double hip surgery, and still to a preternatural degree untroubled by self-analysis. It's disingenuous to suggest that Everything Rock Delights In is purely instinctual; Pete Townshend might like a word with you about that, for a start. But still, the triumph of Liam Gallagher, as he readies himself for a return to peak Oasis's Knebworth stamping ground, is of charisma over theory; a heroic tilting at the intangibles. At one point in Ted Kessler's wise and hilarious interview this month, Liam briefly contemplates how, in June, he will play to 160,000 people over two nights back at Knebworth. "Blows my mind," he admits. "Not that I've thought about it yet… Well, I have, maybe, a little, on the sly. Don't tell anyone."

JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

You don't look too much the worse for wear, I must say. Now where's the girl?

Great MOJO 341. Fantastic to read about Neutral Milk Hotel and also Evan Dando. I had been wondering what had happened to him and what he was doing. It reminded me of Glastonbury in 1993. It was a really hot summer and I woke about 7am, dripping with sweat and a thirst you could photograph (ta, Mark Eitzel). I could hear music coming from someone's boombox or something, but after a few minutes I realised it sounded too clear and I started to recognise the voice. I got out and on top of a transit van was Mr Lemonhead himself, singing and strumming away. I had no idea why he was there, outside my tent, but it was great until he jumped down and shuffled into the crowd. I hope life goes good for him.

Bob Madden, via e-mail

You won't go to the police if I tell you?

I enjoyed the Mudhoney article [MOJO 342]. I first came across them supporting Sonic Youth in 1991 at Leicester University. Such was their incendiary rock power – a coruscating, homoerotic conflagration of Led Zeppelin and the Sex Pistols (I kid you not) – Sonic Youth's more avant pretensions were somewhat crushed. Unable to follow the molten power inflicted on the audience, Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo tried to court controversy and invited the fans up onto the stage, which they duly proceeded to do. It caused structural collapse and near riot, which at the time was a headline in NME. Thankfully nobody was hurt, but the point was made: Mudhoney, like a proto-Nirvana, had arrived and the foundations of rock music in Britain and America were shaken to the core.

DC Kneath, Swansea

What can I tell you, kid? You're right

I'm sure I won't be the first to advise you of your mistake in the line-up of the T. Rex photo on page 65 of MOJO 342. From left to right, it's Marc, Mickey Finn, Bill Legend and Steve Currie at the end of the bar.

Kay Neville, Penarth

You really don't like to talk about the past, do you?

First I'd like to thank you for the cover feature on The Monkees and Michael Nesmith [MOJO 340]. It's a spotlight they've long deserved. I also want to request an article about the '80s New Zealand rock scene, the Dunedin Sound and Flying Nun Records. It's strange that, as an Australian, I had no idea there was this huge indie rock scene right next door. Growing up, I only heard Splitz Enz and Crowded House on the radio. I found a book about NZ rock at a book fair recently and was amazed to learn about all this music that, to my ears, sounds like it could have been recorded and released on Bandcamp yesterday. I'd love to learn more about it – maybe even a How To Buy feature?

Conor Bendle, via e-mail

I don't get tough with anyone… my lawyer does

It was surprising to see a full-page picture of Joe Strummer on-stage at the Rex Theatre in Toronto, in February of 1979, in your Clash MOJO Collectors' Series edition. The photographer would have been standing just to the right of me (I was snapping away in front of Mick Jones). I wonder if the shutterbug would remember the guy who somehow got Strummer's attention part way through the show? Strummer crouched down in front of us while the fan told him, "The station that's sponsoring your show (Toronto's Q107 FM) never plays your records; they only play stuff like Styx and Foreigner!" To which I added, "Yeah, and they slagged off your album!" One of their DJs had given *Give 'Em Enough Rope* a pretty negative review. Strummer got back up to introduce the next song by dedicating it to the station by name, along with something rather uncomplimentary.

The show was great, of course, and I had to try for some autographs, so I waited outside the theatre where a cab was waiting. Sure enough, Strummer came along and I pulled out a punxploitation magazine that had a colour picture of the band. When I couldn't find the pic right away, he said, "Come on man, it's freezin' out here!" which it kind of was, Canadian winters not being leather-jacket weather. Oh, and Q107 reviewed the show the next day, announcing in high dudgeon that The Clash were now banned from their airwaves – which they were, until about the time *London Calling* came out.

Ian Mitchell, Oshawa, Ontario

Forget it, Jake

The headlines in Theories, Rants, Etc [MOJO 342] were taken from David Jones (Patrick McGoohan) to Commander Ferraday (Rock Hudson) in Ice Station Zebra (1968). Keep up the great work.

Gerry Graham, Scottish Borders

This business requires a certain amount of finesse

MOJO is the world's best music magazine, and in a quarter century of reading it I've seldom run into a quibble worth writing to the editor about. There's a first time for everything, I suppose. I loved your special section on George Harrison [MOJO 341] and jumped with great interest into your list of his 30 Greatest Songs. I looked over the list once, then again, and then a third time. Surely I must be overlooking What Is Life? Alas, I wasn't. I'm not saying the omission of that song strips your list of all credibility – it doesn't – but I'm appalled it wasn't among the top five, let alone the top 30.

Chris Dortch, Chattanooga, Tennessee

…I really enjoyed the George Harrison feature, especially your list of his 30 Greatest Songs. I've somehow managed to reach my mid-fifties without having ever heard the beautiful Stuck Inside A Cloud, so thanks for its inclusion. Equally lovely, but not in the list, is the meditative Sat Singing – another recent find of mine, and well worth checking out. To think what I've been missing out on when, instead, I've had a long-lasting struggle to get through Handle With Care without wincing when Dylan starts to sing.

Stephen Gregory, Altrincham

You've got a nasty reputation

There seems to be an increasing tendency to rewrite history. In recent MOJOs we have read how Lennon and McCartney were not actually the best songwriters within The Beatles, but it turned out to be George Harrison [MOJO 341]. This was implied by your article (mainly on the back of the recent Get Back documentary, which was edited to show George in a particular light), and, of course, George did write some good songs. But good though he was, he was never on the same level as Lennon and McCartney.

Then we read how marvellous Karen Dalton was [MOJO 341]. The reality is she sold few records because her singing was total garbage. But the modern way is to proclaim that the person was merely far ahead of their time and/or misunderstood rather than to admit the truth. We then read similar things about Vashti Bunyan [MOJO 342]. She is slightly different to Dalton in that she was undoubtedly more musical, and even a bit listenable too. But the reason that her records did not sell well originally was because her singing and her songs were plainly bland – the easy-listening style of folk music – and not anything that stood out from the crowd. I have no doubt that in about 50 years' time someone will be reading what a brilliant singer XXXXXX (insert any one of a hundred modern "social media" "stars", all of which have zero real talent) was, but did not get recognised as such in their own time. We know the truth now, but will those readers of the future know what to believe?

Graham Stark, Yateley, Hampshire

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WHAT GOES ON!

THE HOT NEWS AND BIZARRE ST… PLANET MOJO

No future: Sex Pistols (from left, Johnny Rotten and Steve Jones) play their last show, Winterland, San Francisco, January 14, 1978.

Anarchy On The TV

The Sex Pistols hit the small screen? Steve Jones and director Danny Boyle explain why and how.

THE SEX PISTOLS have been portrayed by actors on screen before – briefly in Michael Winterbottom's 2002 movie 24 Hour Party People, and more fully in Alex Cox's 1986 film Sid And Nancy. Now new six-part TV drama Pistol promises another screen vision of the group, this time from the direct perspective of one of the main protagonists, namely guitarist Steve Jones, whose extraordinary 2017 autobiography, Lonely Boy, the series is based on.

For Jones, watching an actor playing him on-screen was a strange experience – particularly when that actor was a boy re-enacting the moment the Sex Pistols guitarist was sexually abused by his stepfather. "It is what it was," he explains down the line from his Los Angeles home. "Which was not a lot but enough to fuck me up in the head. It was weird to watch it – not just that scene, but the whole thing. The first time I saw a rough cut it was bizarre… But I soon got used to it."

Directed by feted British filmmaker Danny Boyle, the series focuses on Jones's troubled upbringing in west London and subsequent rise to fame in the mid-'70s as a member of Britain's most notorious punk group. The screenplay, by Craig Pearce (Moulin Rouge) and Frank Cottrell-Boyce (24 Hour Party People), vividly brings to life what Jones describes as "the dark moments and humorous stuff in my story. It ain't a documentary. Rocket Man didn't document Elton's life exactly as it was but it was entertaining. If you're watching it as a documentary, you probably won't like it. I love it. [But] it's not a musical – I hate musicals!"

"It's not a musical – I hate musicals!"
STEVE JONES

Being a huge Sex Pistols fan – he incorporated both the Pistols' and PiL's music into his acclaimed 2012 Olympics opening ceremony – Boyle pounced at the chance to direct the drama, while being cognisant of the saga's more ➢

Getty, Miya Mizuno/FX (2)

Shooting stars: Pistol's (from left) Jacob Slater (Paul Cook), Anson Boon (Rotten) and Toby Wallace (Jones); (below) "Anyone for cricket?" Wallace (right) and Sydney Chandler (Chrissie Hynde) in a scene from Pistol.

"It's a gallery of constantly shifting images...": Pistols (above, from left) Anson Boon, Louis Partridge, Toby Wallace and Jacob Slater in Pistol; (right, from left) Sid Vicious, Steve Jones, Johnny Rotten and Paul Cook in 1977.

contested aspects. "It's always gonna be wrong to someone – that was a given," he says. "But the bigger picture [was], can we give a sense of music as the 'liquid architecture' of our lives. Of these guys turning shit into gold, when the world seemed to be telling them they were worthless and vile? They ignited a movement that was an escape for people like me from the stultifying order of things."

With five hours of screen time to play with, Boyle says he seized the opportunity to not only explore Jones's experiences, but also "the genius and humanity of Johnny Rotten, and some of the humanity and charm of Sid Vicious, as well as their more savage reputations."

Jones is played by two actors – Toby Wallace as 'Big Steve' ("though no one is handsome enough for my role," the guitarist warns) and Toby Woolf as 'Little Steve' – who join a cast including Anson Boon as Rotten, Louis Partridge as Vicious, Chris Lees as Glen Matlock, Jacob Slater as Paul Cook and Game Of Thrones star Thomas Brodie-Sangster as Malcolm McLaren. Boyle tells MOJO that he considers "casting to be everything", seeking in the characters "an essence rather than an exact replica or a photocopy. It's not a photograph, it's a gallery of constantly shifting images... that distracts you from strict anatomical history and sells you a story, an angle that might have a bit of absolute truth in it."

Last year, Lydon contested the right for the Pistols' music to be used in the series, calling it "disrespectful shit" and complaining the script was written without his consent. He lost the action at London's High Court last August. Jones agrees the production would have been practically impossible to do had Lydon succeeded. "The Pistols' music is such a big part of it," he says. "You get those two-bob documentaries that don't use the music, you get bored in two minutes."

"I wouldn't have got involved without the music," says Boyle. "Everything was about the music – that's what they meant to us. At the time we didn't really care about their lives – in so many ways they were anti-celebrities, until two of them weren't any more and it all got very complicated. It's what they played that made sense."

Jones stresses that Lydon has nothing to fear from Pistol. "Anson does a great job, he's really good. He had the biggest challenge playing John, 'cos that weren't easy," he says, "but I think he'll secretly love it when he sees it. It ain't about slagging him off, far from it. I said this in the court case, if the shoe was on the other foot, no one would have a problem. If Danny Boyle wanted to do John's book, I'd have been happy for him."

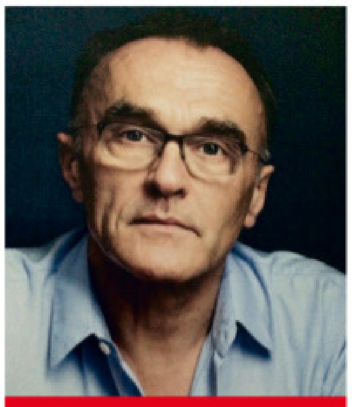
"I tried to reach him early in January last year before we began filming but couldn't get past his manager," adds Boyle. "I hope he finds how much we all admire him as an artist, as a figure as unique in our culture as Oscar Wilde himself."

On-screen, the celluloid Sex Pistols play all the group's music themselves, Jones having given Toby Wallace pre-production guitar lessons in LA. "It definitely gives you a flavour of how we sounded at the start," says Jones, who didn't visit the film sets in London due to Covid. "It all feels real to me and I'm well 'appy with it."

Boyle's satisfaction, meanwhile, comes from when "the actors grab the balls of their characters, whether they have them or not – [punk luminary and Pistols associate] Jordan says it's a vulva-powered revolution – and let rip. But more than that, the music, always. And then the moments where we get the chaos just right, so that the music emerges from the right place."

Pat Gilbert

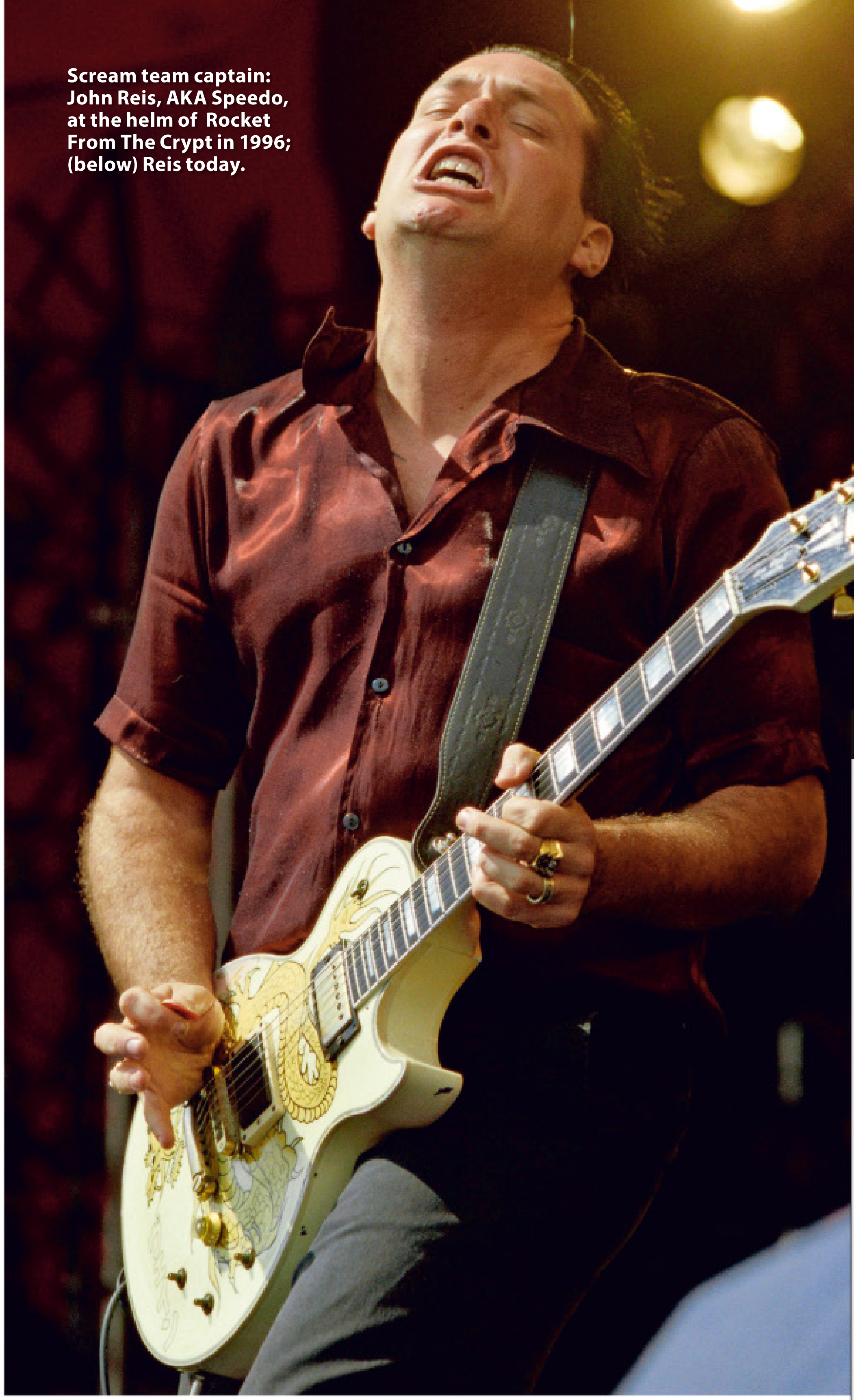
Stream Pistol from May 31 on Disney+; Sex Pistols – The Original Recordings is released May 27 via UMG.



"The Pistols were an escape for people like me."

DANNY BOYLE

Barry Plummer, Rebecca Brenneman/FX



Scream team captain: John Reis, AKA Speedo, at the helm of Rocket From The Crypt in 1996; (below) Reis today.

DRIVEN POST-HARDCORE ROCKETMAN SWAMI JOHN REIS GOES IT ALONE

"I'VE SEEN myself as a cult hero since the age of five," smiles John Reis, amid his San Diego home studio. "It's nice to finally be acknowledged as someone who gets no acknowledgement!"

Beneath the humour, Reis characteristically makes a serious point. Even in Rocket From The Crypt, the horn-handed sextet which delivered his one taste of mainstream success, it wasn't the name 'John Reis' that mid-'90s audiences chanted but 'Speedo', the alias he took to become the extrovert frontman for that band's bar-busting fusion of greaser punk and '50s rock'n'roll. Now, after over 30 years at the post-hardcore blast furnace in myriad ensembles – most notably Drive Like Jehu, Rocket FTC and Hot Snakes – he's finally releasing an album under his own name, or thereabouts: *Ride The Wild Night* by Swami John Reis. "It's probably the most autobiographical record I've made," he says. "Even when I'm joking about something, it's something that happened."

As a child, Reis first picked up the trumpet, thanks to an infatuation with Doc Severinsen, bandleader on the Johnny Carson show. "It was very difficult to play. Then my parents purchased me an electric guitar when I was 12. I wanted to write songs that were comedic, because I like to make people laugh. It wasn't until I discovered punk rock that I went from a spectator to a participant."

As big a fan of ELO as Black Flag – "me and my punk friends had many guilty pleasures that weren't so guilty" – the teenage Reis graduated from watching San Diego hardcore heroes Battalion Of Saints to playing parties with Coitus Interruptus, or Conservative Itch ("we would change the name as long as the initials remained 'CI'"), until he found comrades equally dedicated to relentless practice, primarily singer Rick Froberg, with whom he formed Pitchfork and made his first records. Froberg would accompany Reis for Drive Like Jehu's tectonic dissonance, and later on, Hot Snakes, which crunched out three albums of tribal riff minimalism from 2000-06. DLJ ran concurrent to Rocket, but were ultimately stymied by that band's maniacal pursuit of pure fun. The Rocket ride peaked in 1996 with On A Rope at Number 12 in the UK singles chart. "I wanted rock'n'roll to be my passport to the world," says Reis. "We accomplished everything we set out to do, and much much more."

Winding up Rocket and Hot Snakes to concentrate on parenthood, in 2011 Reis reactivated both for live work, albeit on a more casual basis; likewise Drive Like Jehu from 2014. While Hot Snakes released a new album in 2018, he's happy confining RFTC to annual one-off gigs. But at 53, Reis's appetites remain unquenchable: 2022 has also seen the debut by Plosivs, a lockdown venture with Pinback singer Rob Crow, deploying song ideas originally destined for a halfway completed Hot Snakes album, his next project ("we're really excited to finish it").

"I've learned that ultimately a great song is a great idea," he reflects. "Whenever things are kind of looking bleak, some opportunity comes out of nowhere."

Keith Cameron

Swami John Reis's Ride The Wild Night is out now on Swami Records.

> "I wanted rock'n'roll to be my passport to the world."
> **SWAMI JOHN REIS**

REIS CREAM

Swami John's triple whammy-on-wax.

Drive Like Jehu
Yank Crime
(ELEMENTAL/INTERSCOPE, 1994)

DLJ's caustic melodrama *in excelsis*: Froberg screaming over Reis's abstract guitar waves, atop the lockstep rigour of Mike Kennedy and Mark Trombino's rhythm section. 2003's Swami reissue adds vital '92 single Bullet Train To Vegas/Hand Over Fist.

Rocket From The Crypt
Scream, Dracula, Scream!
(ELEMENTAL/INTERSCOPE, 1995)

Reis sought respite from peak Dischord-era intensity by becoming 'Speedo' and taking horny inspiration from The Saints, eventually blowing big with this ribald arsenal of slam-punk anthems. Pantomime beckoned, but 2001's *Group Sounds* restored the snakebite.

Hot Snakes
Jericho Sirens
(SUB POP, 2018)

Crudely, a groovier, more commercial version of DLJ turbulence, Hot Snakes' alliance of Froberg's misanthropic yowl with Reis's fervid downstroke guitar and monster drumming (Jason Korkounis *and* Mario Rubalcaba) emerged from a 10-year hiatus still hungry, still angry.

Corbis

Knowledge is power: Nick Cave and Warren Ellis making the magic happen; (right) director Andrew Dominik.

SCREEN CAVE-PORTRAIT THIS MUCH I KNOW TO BE TRUE – REVEALED!

WHEN NICK CAVE was asked what he wanted to do during last year's Covid-induced hiatus, the answer was simple: to shoot the grand touring show he'd been forced to can. Cut to a new sideline as a ceramicist, alongside his revelatory interactive blog The Red Hand Files and a musical rebirth that shows little sign of abating.

The resulting film is Andrew Dominik's surprisingly joyous, often transcendent This Much I Know To Be True – a concert documentary of sorts, shot in an empty space in Battersea in spring 2021, and intercut with musings from the man himself and his best friend Warren Ellis.

It's been six long years since One More Time With Feeling – Dominik's previous film with Cave, which tracked him completing the *Skeleton Tree* album with the Bad Seeds in the wake of his son Arthur's death. Cave has "sort of recovered," Dominik tells MOJO in Berlin, where the film premiered last month. "The film's about what he's learned and what he can pass on."

Cave and Dominik go back more than 30 years, to when the New Zealander was dating Cave's ex. Since then, Cave and his Bad Seeds sidekick Warren Ellis have scored several of Dominik's films (including the upcoming Marilyn Monroe biopic Blonde, also due this year). Dominik intended to show how much Cave had moved on since the horrific events of 2016, as well as unpack the creative dynamic that exists between Cave and Ellis.

"Warren's the only person he's sat down in a room and made music with," Dominik says. "There's something magical if they're together, that doesn't happen if it's just Warren bringing in loops. Warren's like a music-generation machine: he's making it by the bucket-load. I think Nick just finds it incredibly exciting to be singing lyrics over shit that he doesn't know where it's going. I mean, there are certain tracks they've literally just cut out of the session they did that day. It's an incredibly exciting way to work."

> "Nick's going to believe in God, whether God exists or not."

Dominik interviewed the pair, separately, in Brighton and London, as they "often contradict each other" and work in radically different ways, which the filmmaker shorthands as Ellis's chaos versus Cave's precision. The interviews provide cutaways from the performances of music from 2019's *Ghosteen* and last year's *Carnage*: multi-instrumentalist Ellis adds vocal flourishes and conducts the strings and backing singers, while two crews frantically film them all on a circular dolly track. The whole performance was mixed in 7.1 surround sound. Marianne Faithfull cameos with a spoken-word Prayer, despite ill health.

Dominik hopes audiences will witness a different side to Cave, who he says is unrecognisable from the "terrifying" figure he first encountered in 1988. "He's a totally spiritual guy. Nick's attitude is, he's going to believe in God, whether God exists or not. There's a line he says in the movie, about being a husband and father and citizen first [and a musician second]. Since he's had that attitude, the stuff he's been making has been much better… I mean, he's really good."

Ed Gibbs

This Much I Know To Be True screens in 130 cinemas across the UK as part of a special global event release on May 11.

GIMME FIVE… SONGS ABOUT NIGHTCLUBS

Barry Manilow
Copacabana (At The Copa)
(ARISTA, 1978)

Big-rumba-sleeved earworm about a fatal romance at the famed NY nitespot, also covered by James Last, The Brighouse And Rastrick Brass Band and DJ Hell. Recently played to disperse Covid protesters in New Zealand.

The Prefects
Barbarellas
(PEEL SESSION, 1979)

Speedily saluted by Robert Lloyd's first band, the Brum punk nexus where the Pistols, Clash etc spread the virus: enjoy the ashtray carpets, sub-par beer and a joyous invitation to "see the toilets". (NB: published by Shot Off In The War Songs).

Dana And Gene
Dario, Can You Get Me Into Studio 54
(RCA, 1979)

Produced by Joan Jett/Mr Bloe/Jonathan Richman eminence Kenny Laguna, with bv's by Ellie Greenwich, this fraught '79 two-way tale of whether or not to go dancing at the home of disco was written by August 'Kid Creole' Darnell.

The Period
We Hate Wigan Casino!
(1978; AVAILABLE ON V/A BORED TEENAGERS VOL. 10, BIN LINER, 2017)

Manchester yoof bring a recorded-in-a-huge-echo-ey-room song of total disdain for the home of Northern soul. Seems a bit gratuitous – maybe cheer yourself up with 1975's *Live At The Wigan Casino* by adopted son of Barnsley Tommy Hunt.

George Shearing Quintet
Lullaby Of Birdland
(MGM, 1952)

Tribute to the Broadway spot named for Charlie Parker after the pianist was 'asked' by terrifying music biz enforcer Morris Levy. See also Weather Report's Birdland and the Manhattan Transfer's near-impossible cover with lyrics.

Charlie Grey, Matt Kennedy

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MON 07 NOV LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC HALL
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WED 09 NOV EDINBURGH USHER HALL
FRI 11 NOV NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL
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Everything's (eventually) gone Green: Gartside adds the finishing touches to his sixth album, Hackney, London, March 2022.

HE'S BACK! AFTER 16 YEARS, GREEN GARTSIDE READIES SCRITTI POLITTI LP SIX

"I WAS ABSOLUTELY fucking horrified the other day," says Scritti Politti main man Green Gartside, who has "a terrible toothache" when MOJO calls him in early March. "Rhodri [Marsden, live keyboardist] pointed out that it was 16 years since the last fucking record! I hate even saying it out loud."

But relief is at hand. The day after he handed Rough Trade label head Geoff Travis 2006's *White Bread Black Beer* – the fifth album in the modest but immaculate canon that began with 1978's Marxist post-punk 45 Skank Bloc Bologna – Gartside was back in his studio at home in Hackney, where recording gear and soundproofing currently share space with under-used analogue synths and his bike. "I go into the studio here at home pretty much every day of my life," he says. "Even if I work on an existing song, I'll also have to start something new – in all this time, there's been a new idea pretty much every day."

Consequently, after Green vowed last year to finish an album, engineer Andy Houston has moved 300 tracks from old Macs to new ones, with another 900 to go. Some are finished, some are "scraps": all are the product of Green's particular blessing and curse. "I need to make music every day to stop me going insane," he explains. "That's probably literally true. But I've got decide-a-phobia…

> "I'm absolutely terrified of finishing things."
> **GREEN GARTSIDE**

that slightly obsessive fear of imperfection, of better options, so I procrastinate. When you've got to decide how to finish a bit of music before putting it before some imagined listener, then the anxiety becomes intolerable again. And so you start a new song for the profound pleasure of so doing. That's the story, in a nutshell – I can't live without starting new music, and I'm absolutely terrified of finishing things."

Having previously channelled reggae, soul, rap and the most sophisticated pop, of late he's been exploring the sounds of trap. "It's kind of my take on the mysterious, beautiful and unsettling world of trap music," he says. "There are some things that are kind of guitar-driven, and some stuff that owes a bit of a nod to bubblegum chamber pop, I guess. If I list the influences, it sounds like an inedible, disgusting mix – trap, bubblegum, and British traditional music or something. If I read that, I'd give it a wide berth, to be honest. But the influences are there and it's my job to make something palatable of those ingredients."

The final tracklist is still to be decided upon, but does the LP have a theme? "I would expect not," he says. "Although you hold it up at arm's length and think, Oh, yeah – that keeps coming up. I was going to say, 'the absent father.' We'll have to see whether that becomes a trope. It's quite angry in places, sort of obliquely political. It will draw from a lexicon of arguably revolutionary language, from, in part, struggle and war. And, you know, ceaseless self-probing, plus loathing. So it's all there."

As he was on *White Bread Black Beer*, Green's the sole instrumentalist, though he wants former Scritti keyboardist David Gamson, who worked on the celebrated *Cupid & Psyche 85* LP, to take part, plus, he hopes, various unnamed rappers (current favourites include Georgia MCs UnoTheActivist and MadeinTYO).

With so much material to hand, does he feel that fans might get *another* new LP before 2038? "I mean, it's possible," says Green. "You'll be pleased to hear I started another idea this morning, which sounds like something from an early John McLaughlin record. I should get back to it really."

Ian Harrison

FACT SHEET

Title: TBC
Date: 2023
Production: Green Gartside
Songs: Mother Succubus/Two Years Ago
The Buzz: "It's like [German philosopher Theodor W.] Adorno says: 'Neither music nor philosophy can carry on without at least some faith in better things to come.' I do have residual faith that it's good shit."
Green Gartside

ALSO WORKING

…**Ice-T** (right) announced new **BODY COUNT** LP *Merciless* in March: "it's gotta be HARDER than the last," he promised …a new **PIXIES** LP will be released this year, with March's **Tom Dalgety**-produced Human Crime the opening salvo …**PETE TOWNSHEND** explained recent in-studio images in a recent Rolling Stone chat, saying he's working on the music for an art installation for his novel The Age Of Anxiety, calling it "a solo project which isn't exactly a solo album." Regarding future **Who** activity, he described **Roger Daltrey** as being "unsure," adding, "is it not better for me to work with new artists rather than sit with someone like Roger that isn't really liking the record I'm making anyway?" …the Top Dawg Entertainment label's president **Punch** spoke to mic.com about **KENDRICK LAMAR**'s last LP for the label: "It's different now just because it's different," he said, "he's well capable of doing everything on his own" …this month **Michael Gira** begins recording a new **SWANS** LP, due for release in 2023 …**BILLY DUFFY**'s been seen playing a Gibson acoustic guitar in a studio bedecked with Persian carpets …**LAURIE ANDERSON**'s (below) recording a reworking of her 2000 orchestral piece concerning the 1937 death of pioneering female aviator **Amelia Earhart**. As she told The Irish Times, "[Earhart] really did get the art of falling… the piece ends [with an] inability to communicate" …**KANYE WEST** has shared photos of himself in the studio with **Beach House**, but what they were up to remains a mystery…

Getty (2), Barkley Bandon (2)

ROBERT JON & THE WRECK
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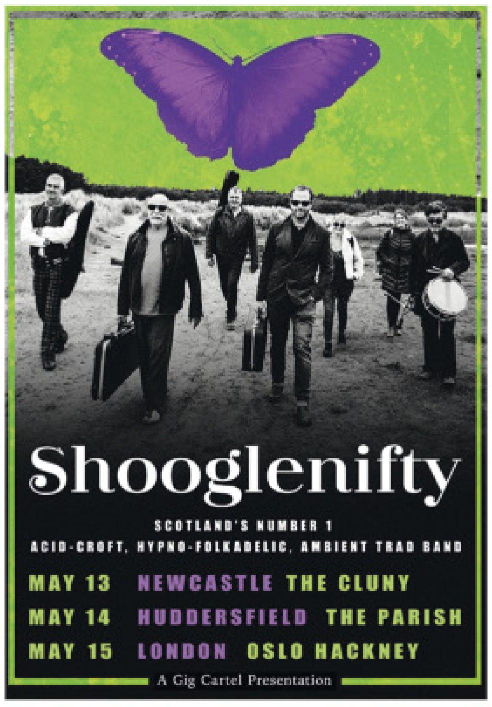
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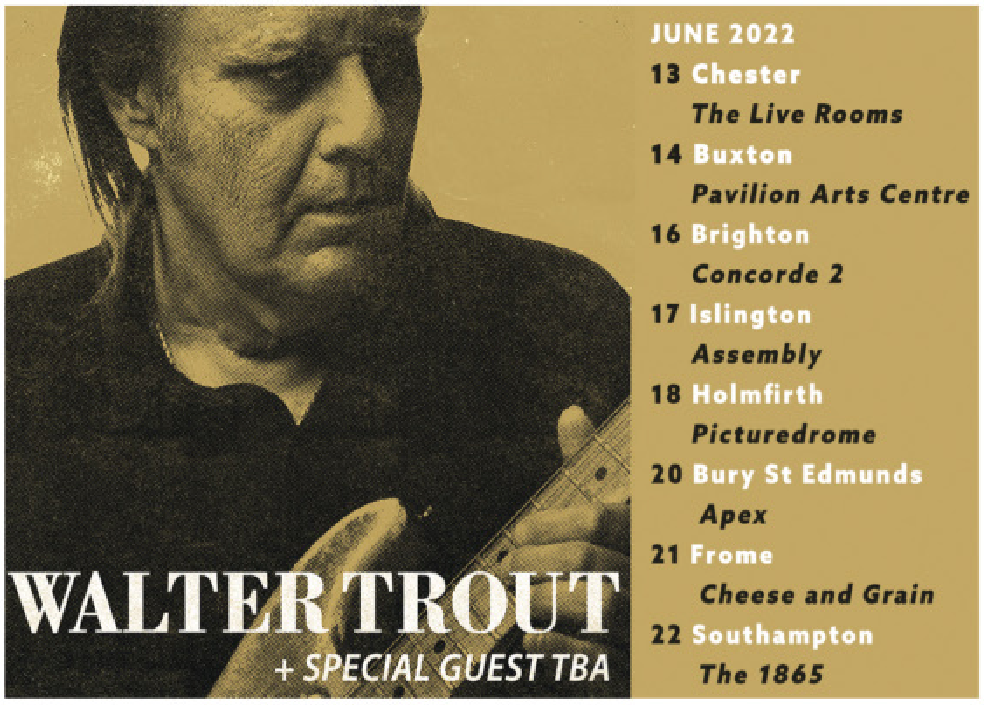
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17 Islington
Assembly
18 Holmfirth
Picturedrome
20 Bury St Edmunds
Apex
21 Frome
Cheese and Grain
22 Southampton
The 1865

Caravan
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08 OCT - GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL
09 OCT - BASINGSTOKE THE HAYMARKET
13 OCT - BILSTON ROBIN
14 OCT - LEEDS BRUDENELL
15 OCT - LIVERPOOL EPSTEIN
16 OCT - BUXTON PAVLION
20 OCT - BURY ST EDMUNDS APEX
21 OCT - NEWCASTLE CLUNY
22 OCT - GLASGOW ORAN MOR
23 OCT - STAMFORD CORN EXCHANGE
25 OCT - ISLINGTON UNION CHAPEL

THE UNDERTONES
JUNE:
4 Coventry HMV Empire *
JULY:
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30 Castleton Devils Arse
OCTOBER:
1 Holmfirth Picturedrome
6 Southampton The 1865
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hugh cornwell

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Haymarket
28 Oct Bury St Edmunds
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FRI 8 CHESTER LIVE ROOMS
SUN 10 THE DEVIL'S ARSE CAVE CASTLETON

THE CHAMELEONS
FEAT. MARK BURGESS (BASS / VOCALS) & REG SMITHIES (GUITAR)
FRI 12 AUG
THE DEVIL'S ARSE CASTLETON
SAT 13 AUG
PICTUREDROME HOLMFIRTH

Do the bright thing: Sun Signature's Damon Reece and Liz Fraser bring the "warm lustre of summer"; (right and below) Fraser and "sonic master" Steve Hackett performing at the Royal Festival Hall, London, August 7, 2012.

COCTEAU TWIN LIZ FRASER RETURNS AT LAST! WITH SUN'S SIGNATURE

IT WAS A little under a decade ago that Elizabeth Fraser, preparing to play Anohni's Meltdown in 2012, spoke to MOJO of her hopes to release new music. When she played the Royal Festival Hall that August – she was, she says now, "Shitting kittens at the prospect of making an audience sit through 10 songs they had never heard before" – fans were nonetheless thrilled by multiple new songs. In June, that new music will finally see the light of day when Fraser and her (personal and creative) partner and drummer Damon Reece release a five-track EP as Sun's Signature.

Featuring the same Massive Attack/ Spiritualized/Julian Cope band players as the Meltdown show, the mini-album is a simultaneously corporeal and etheric reintroduction to Fraser's *sui generis* talents and dream-mapping voice. Textured by sound sources including vibraphone, cimbalom, dulcimer, bass clarinets and Taurus bass pedals, such inspirational debts as Love's *Forever Changes*, John Barry's film arrangements and Genesis' *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* are cited. Songs include the torchy Bluedusk, with its Scott Walker-on-Montague Terrace unreality, the upper-atmosphere devotional Golden Air, and Underwater, re-recorded from its original release 22 years ago on a white-label 12-inch, which bridges earlier work with Cocteau Twins and new creation. Their love of Genesis means Steve Hackett plays guitar on three tracks.

Ben Part, Getty (2)

"We are in absolutely no rush to do anything at all really."
DAMON REECE

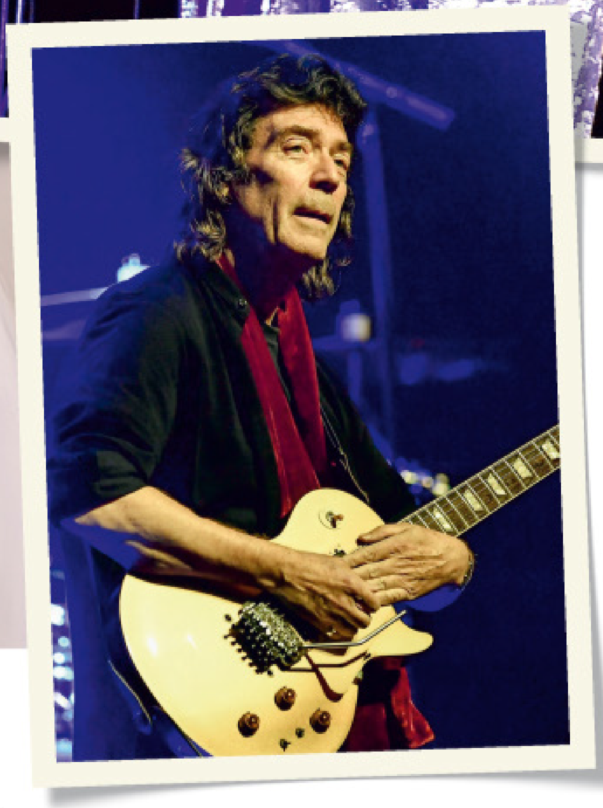
"We are in absolutely no rush to do anything at all really," says Reece, who, like Fraser, provides written answers to MOJO's questions.

What's kept you?

Damon Reece: After the Meltdown shows we realised the songs needed more refinement. There has always been an element of mixing the songs then living with them for a while with a view to possibly replacing individual parts or sections within the songs. This is a very lengthy process… there are a lot of subtle details to be heard in these recordings, especially on posh headphones.

So why were the conditions right now?

Elizabeth Fraser: Timing I suppose… we had a few songs mixed and we were just



sitting on them. The right people entered the frame at the right time. They proposed a realistic and exciting plan of how we could release these songs in a way that really appealed…

Do the varying styles on the record reflect your current listening?

DR: We didn't really take much notice of the 'varied styles' during the writing/recording process of these songs, if we concern ourselves with stuff like that we would never get anything finished.

EF: We both listen to all kinds of music, to be honest much of it reaches far beyond our own musical and vocal limitations as well as our understanding, but it's exciting and intriguing to experience rhythms, melodies, sounds that are so unfamiliar… it enlivens your will to persevere and explore further.

What does the future hold for Sun's Signature?

DR: Sun's Signature isn't really a band name, it's more just a name for this set of recordings. There isn't any plan to release any further material at this present time [and] there are no plans to tour or perform any shows.

Might you work with Steve Hackett again?

DR: Who knows, but unlikely. All the musicians we work with are incredibly helpful at taking our sketches to new levels in these recordings. We recorded a couple of sessions with Steve Hackett and he was very inspiring to record with, adding the odd guitar solo here and there plus lots of interesting sound effects throughout the recordings. I hope we get to work with him again. He is a true gent and sonic master.

What does the band name mean to you?

EF: The warm lustre of the summer sun, the fulfilment of a flower.

Elizabeth – it's hugely gratifying to see you re-emerge as a singer. Do you know how much you and the music you've made means to people?

EF: It's kind of you to say so, thank you, although I do feel that you are being too generous about my voice. There are so many aspects of my voice that I long to progress with, some I long to wrest free from altogether in order to feel and sound less tense when I sing, that sort of thing. It's a complex business, as anyone trying to transform the habits of a lifetime knows.

A man I have tremendous respect for, besides Damon, is Michael Deason-Barrow, he is a singer and composer who specialises in the healing, therapeutic approach to music and voicework. He points out that, "A CELLO is played BY a person… A VOICE IS a person." That's astonishing on reflection! I've got a lot of work to do…

Ian Harrison

Sun's Signature is released on Partisan Records on Record Store Day's second drop (June 18) with a digital release to follow.

LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

Conor Oberst

Bright Eyes' mainman bows down to ***If You're Feeling Sinister*** by Belle And Sebastian (Jeepster, 1996).

I was 16 in 1996, playing in a band that never really got off the ground. I don't think we even had a name. It was all loud, screaming, distorted guitars – we were listening to Midwest, hard, emo punk shit.

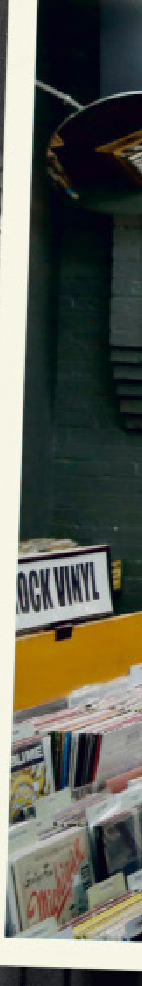
One day a friend of mine, Aaron Druery, a really sick guitar player, showed up with this CD and said, "I think you'll like this." In my parents' house we had a room, the hangout room, that had a stereo. That's where I first put it on, and I just fell in love with it. I'm not really a big fan of the 'T' word (ie, 'twee') but there's like a delicate-ness that's kind of on its own. I think that Stuart [Murdoch] has that rare gift, like Randy Newman, where he can write a song that's simultaneously terribly sad and also funny, and then there are others that are just kind of straight, like The Fox In The Snow, which is such a beautiful song. They were mysterious too – they're like, recreating The Last Supper or something in the inside sleeve and there's just so many of them, and because there wasn't the internet then, I remember thinking, Which one's the singer? There was an element of novelty too – I wasn't completely familiar with these very Scottish and English terms. Now, I think it feels timeless and self-contained, and because it wasn't following any trend of the time, it still sounds fresh.

It was a big influence on Bright Eyes, in the sense of its 'more is more' ethos. There's a lot of things happening but there's a home-made feeling to it. That's something that we embraced, that it doesn't just have to be bass, drums and guitars all the time.

I became a big fan and over the years have opened for them many times. I would not have guessed that, listening to this record at 16. It is kind of incredible.

As told to Ian Harrison

Bright Eyes release expanded 'Companion' Editions of their first three LPs on Dead Oceans on May 27.

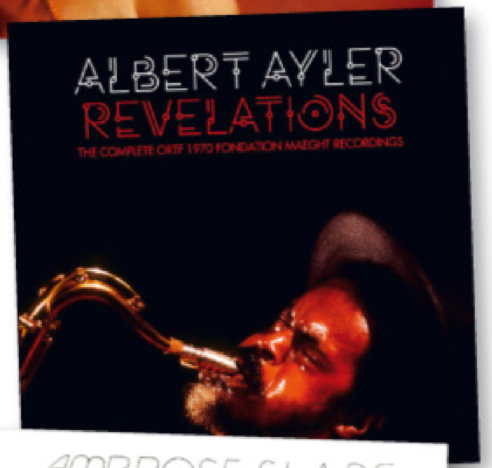


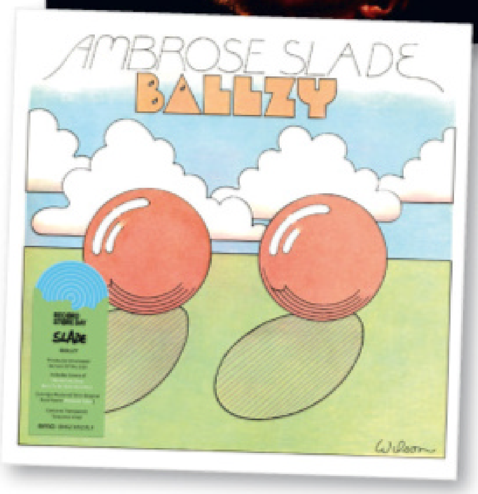
Wax Vobiscum (clockwise from main): Catherine Deneuve, Johnny Hallyday and copains looking for that weed-coloured RSD pressing of Greensleeves' *Ganja Anthems*, yesterday; vinyl junkies on the racks; booty from Morricone, Sandy Denny, The Kinks, Ambrose Slade, Albert Ayler and Blondie.

RECORD STORE DAY IS HERE AGAIN! BUT WHAT'S UP FOR GRABS?

THE SHOPS ARE open, spring is in the air, and the record buyer's thoughts turn to, well – records. Luckily, it's Record Store Day again on April 23, so what are the limited-edition, super-covetable releases to look out for, and what trends can be gleaned from the combined efforts of the dozens of labels involved?

First up, the big guns have anniversaries to mark. **The Rolling Stones**' *More Hot Rocks (Big Hits & Fazed Cookies)* (UMC/ABKCO) gets a 50th-anniversary refresh on double coloured vinyl with embossed Gered Mankowitz litho prints. **Joni Mitchell**'s *Blue 50: Demos, Outtakes And Live Tracks From Joni Mitchell Archives, Vol. 2* (Rhino) is a single 180-gram LP pick of rarities from last year's archive box. Repressed on vinyl for the first time since '72, **Dusty Springfield**'s *See All Her Faces* (UMC/Mercury) gets a five-decade double-disc expansion with out-takes and extra tracks. **T. Rex**'s *The Slider* (Demon) marks half a century with a fetching picture disc, while a 40th-anniversary edition of **Dire Straits**' *Love Over Gold* (UMC/Mercury) is a half-speed master





Getty (2)

to benefit the War Child charity.

Other anniversaries are less strictly observed. **The Doors**' 4-LP *L.A. Woman Sessions* (Rhino) reveals song-by-song in-studio development of the group's 1971 farewell, including a Riders On The Storm demo with soon-to-quit producer Paul Rothschild. A new iteration of **Stevie Nicks**' 1981 LP *Bella Donna* (Rhino) adds bonuses never released on vinyl before, while a repress of **Groundhogs**' *Hogwash* (Fire) has its original 1971 tri-fold sleeve restored and gets an extra disc of live album tracks from a BBC In Concert broadcast. **Lou Reed**'s *I'm So Free: 1971 RCA Demos* (Sony CMG) is a favourites-heavy, first-time-on-album document of Lou's first solo session.

The mysterious frisson of coloured vinyl is, as ever, well represented. **Blur**'s *Bustin' + Dronin'* (Parlophone) is reborn on double blue and green LP with a replica Japanese OBI strip, while **Soul Jazz Records** make super-fine comps *Betty Harris: The Lost Queen Of New Orleans Soul* and *Studio One Classics* re-available on green and purple wax respectively. **Scott Walker**'s solo

BONUS BEATS

More admirable RSD oddities to watch for.

Ronald Binge
Sailing By (Theme From The Shipping Forecast)/ Elizabethan Serenade (VINYL EXOTICA 7-INCH)
Radio 4's etherising late-night mood masterpiece and the 'light music' classic, together at last on blue wax.

Ambrose Slade
Ballzy (BMG LP)
US-only '69 Slade LP, on translucent blue vinyl, in original livery. Notes misspell Dave Hill as 'Hilton'!

Nick Lowe
Wireless World (YEP ROC LP)
Lowe's 1978 LP was *Pure Pop For Now People* in the US, and *Jesus Of Cool* everywhere else. He mischievously told one outlet it was called *Wireless World*, and they reported it. Now, 44 years on, *Wireless World* is finally released on 'Dustbin Green' vinyl.

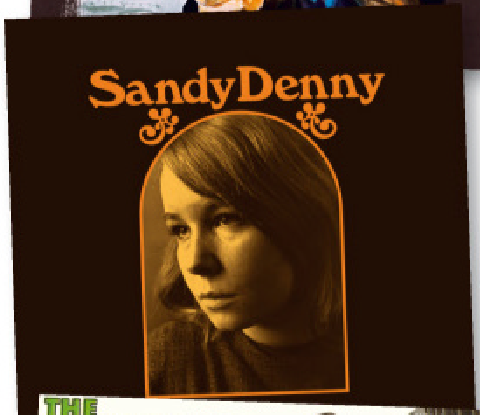
Brian Bennett
Voyage (A Journey into Discoid Funk) (REAL GONE MUSIC LP)
Shadows sticksman's breaks'n'synths cult classic for louche, tipsy androids, on 'Blue With Black Swirl' wax.

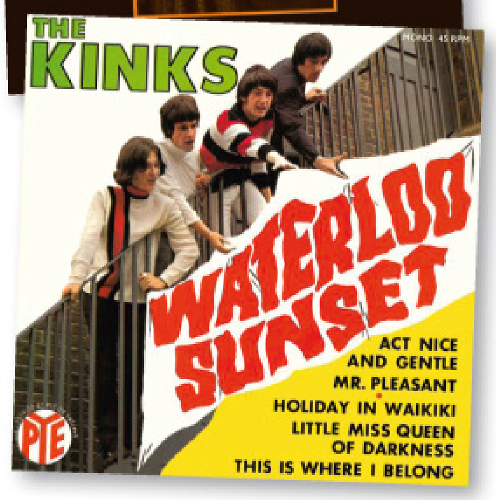
The Damned
Strawberries (BMG LP)
In 40th-anniversary Smellyvision with "strawberry scented, pink & red swirl vinyl." Sniff up!

comp *Boy Child* (UMC) gets expanded onto two 180-gram white albums with new notes from Jarvis Cocker, while **The League Unlimited Orchestra**'s 1982 remix classic *Love And Dancing* (UMC) gets the half-speed treatment and a white vinyl makeover. At 40, **The Who**'s *It's Hard* (UMC/ Polydor) gets expanded on orange and yellow vinyl.

Elsewhere, archival compilations become fully-fledged LPs in their own right. **Pearls Before Swine**'s *The Exaltation Of Tom Rapp* (Earth) collects unreleased recordings and rarities from the psych-folk cult. **Karen Dalton**'s *Shuckin' Sugar* (Delmore Recording Society) selects from three 1963 reel-to-reel tapes, with Dalton singing solo and in duet with Richard Tucker. Including seven never-heard songs, it's pressed by Third Man on "transparent, natural vinyl." **Sandy Denny**'s two-LP *The Early Home Recordings* (Earth) sees 27 pre-Fairport cuts appear on vinyl, including two versions of Who Knows Where The Time Goes. Denny can also be heard singing her signature song for the last time on *Gold Dust Live At The Royalty* (UMC/Island), where her final gig from 1977 makes its vinyl debut. Her husband, bandmate and producer **Trevor Lucas**'s long-lost 1966 LP *Overlander* (Earth) also gets an RSD reissue.

This year, the noble 7-inch single remains an essential format. Five 45s by Ronnie Wood's first group **The Birds** are boxed as *The Birds Ride Again* (Flood Gallery), while from **Blondie**, the Sunday Girl EP (UMC/Capitol) is a 7-inch double-pack featuring the original 1979 hit version and the French version (on red wax), and





the '78 demo and a live '79 version on a second yellow disc. **Foo Fighters**' Making A Fire (Mark Ronson Re-Version) b/w Chasing Birds (Preservation Hall Jazz Band Re-Version) (Columbia) finds Grohl's musical pals covering *Medicine At Midnight* tracks. On 10-inch, **David Bowie**'s Toy EP collects rarities from 2000, while four-track 12-inch Brilliant Adventure features unheard material from the *Outside* era (both Parlophone). Newly upgraded to 12-inch, **U2**'s A Celebration (UMC/Island) adds two unreleased takes to the 1982 original. Turning singles back into albums, conversely, is **Frankie Goes to Hollywood**'s *Altered Reels* (UMC), which collects the capricious, lunatic "cassingles" for big hits Relax and Two Tribes.

The live LPs are also tempting this year. **Laura Nyro**'s *Trees Of The Ages: Laura Nyro Live In Japan* (Omnivore) was previously a 2003 Japanese CD-only release of 1994 performances in Tokyo and Osaka, while **Grateful Dead**'s *Wembley Empire Pool, London, England 4/8/72* (Rhino) comes on five LPs in a 'Two Piece Telescope Box.' ***Jefferson Airplane*** *Live At The Monterey International Pop Festival* (The Monterey International Pop Festival Foundation) sees a first vinyl release for this 1967 show.

It's fair to say live jazz aficionados will feel catered to. *Revelations* (Elemental Music) is a 5-LP, illustrated and annotated document of two French gigs by free jazz sax colossus **Albert Ayler**, recorded just months before his death in 1970. Resonance release two **Bill Evans** Buenos Aires sets from 1973 and '79 officially for the first time, mastered by Bernie Grundman, who also does the honours on **Charles Mingus**'s 3-LP, 1972-recorded *The Lost Album From Ronnie Scott's* (Resonance).

There are also movie soundtracks of note: **Angelo Badalamenti**'s OST to David Lynch's 1986 masterpiece *Blue Velvet* (Concord/UMG) is expanded with an hour of extra and alternative cues on 'Marbleized Blue' vinyl, while **Ennio Morricone** works including *Una Pistola Per Ringo/Il Ritorno Di Ringo* (BTF) and *Trio Infernale* (Rustblade) are available on a variety of vinyl hues. **Bruno Nicolai**'s "sensual, deranged" score *La Dama Rossa Uccide Sette Volte* (Decca/CAM Sugar) is inevitably on 'Blood Red Vinyl.' Hip-hop OST ***Breakin'*** (Get On Down), by contrast, comes in a 'Coke Bottle Clear Pressing.'

Other RSD initiatives include a 15th-anniversary limited-edition turntable from Rega, available on the day, and numerous grassroots larks across the nation, such as Shrubs & Dubs of Hackney giving away a shrub with RSD purchases (see the RSD site for more incentives to get out and mingle). Finally, does a book count for RSD? It does if it's **Jonny Trunk**'s A-Z Of Record Shop Bags (Fuel). It's a nostalgic, fascinating trawl of more than 500 carrier bags from the '40s to the '90s, from Rumbelows to Muzik City. Time to get some bags, as well as records, to treasure.

Ian Harrison

More info at recordstoreday.co.uk. Support your local record shop!

"Bruno Nicolai's 'sensual, deranged' film score is inevitably on 'Blood Red Vinyl.'"

SECOND HELPINGS

More hot platters upcoming in RSD's June 18 'drop'.

Prince
The Gold Experience Deluxe
(SONY CMG 2-LP)
Replicates the rare US 1995 promo, on translucent gold vinyl with a bonus side of remixes.

Linda Hoover
I Mean To Shine
(OMNIVORE LP)
From 1970, an 18-year-old ex-talent show winner collaborates with Gary Katz, Donald Fagen and Walter Becker. Label boss Morris Levy derailed the project and it was never released. Until now!

Keith Richards
Talk Is Cheap/Live At The Palladium
(MINDLESS RECORDS 2-MC)
On magnetic tape, Keith's 1988 solo debut and live with The X-Pensive Winos the same year.

Miles Davis
Live In Montreal, July 7, 1983
(SONY CMG 2-LP)
The gig's first full release is a taster for the upcoming Miles Bootleg Series covering the '81-'85 period.

The Kinks
Waterloo Sunset
(BMG 12-INCH)
Six tracks recorded in mono, on yellow vinyl in the 1967 French single artwork. *Délicieux*!

Top dog: Motown veteran Abdul 'Duke' Fakir is still happy with his lot.

ABDUL 'DUKE' FAKIR

The last Four Top talks Motown, the borscht belt and inner voices.

OF ALL THE Motown acts, few harmonised as closely as The Four Tops. Uniting in Detroit in 1953, signing to Motown in 1964 brought success, including US Number 1s I Can't Help Myself (Sugar Pie Honey Bunch) and, also a UK chart-topper, Reach Out I'll Be There. Scoring 15 more US Top 20 singles, they sang in harmony for 44 years straight. After the passing of Levi Stubbs, Lawrence Payton and Obie Benson, now 86-year-old Abdul 'Duke' Fakir is the last original Top. Set to lead a new formation on a UK tour with The Temptations in September, and with a musical due to open in Detroit later this year, his new memoir I'll Be There gives his side of the saga. "I've had a wonderful career," he says from his home in Detroit. "And it's still going on."

You're a great believer in voices and prophetic dreams.

Yeah. I was brought up religiously. After things like that kept coming, I thought, "Let me just keep listening and doing what my heart tells me," or what I've sensed that inner voice is saying. I've lived by that. And I'm still here, and I'm still happy. So I don't think I'm wrong.

There were long years before success, how does the narrative stay so buoyant?

You know, some people would say, "Man, you mean y'all worked for nine years before you got to Motown?" And you'd say, "Yes! But they were adorable years." You have no idea how much fun we had. We were working different types of club, from a supper club, to a beer garden almost, but we were just working and doing our craft. We worked up in Quebec City once, which is all French speaking, and we had the funniest little band with an accordion and a guy with a broken cymbal playing drums, and we had to figure out how to entertain those people. And we did. We learned that people enjoyed us, you know? So we just learned a lot.

"Love has so many different zip codes and zones."
ABDUL 'DUKE' FAKIR

TOPS FIVE

Duke's knock-out bunch.

1 **The Four Tops** *MacArthur Park* (MOTOWN, 1971)
2 **The Temptations** *My Girl* (GORDY, 1964)
3 **The Supremes** *Baby Love* (MOTOWN, 1964)
4 **Marvin Gaye** *What's Going On* (TAMLA, 1971)
5 **Ray Charles** *Georgia On My Mind* (ABC-PARAMOUNT, 1960)

You met Cab Calloway – what was he like?

Cab Calloway, he was just like you see in the movies, fun, always cracking jokes, an entertainer on and off stage. You know, it was just so exciting meeting these people when you're a kid. We played the borscht circuit and they had *great* entertainment, the Las Vegas kind of entertainment. On a Saturday night at this one hotel, it's a free-for-all jamboree. Artists you looked up to would come and do impromptu performances – you could see Sammy Davis Jr.! All you can do is accept it and enjoy it. You see the real feeling, which is, most artists love what they do, and they don't mind doing it anywhere.

And then there's Motown and the years of hits.

What was funny about that was, someone would say, "Duke, you know those nine years when we went around the country? All we had to do was go across the street to Motown, it would have saved us a lot of travel." It was a real, real change, going into Motown, into the studio. Motown was really an academy of musical arts, it had everything that you needed. They taught you how to how to make records, then they taught you how to sell yourself with the record, you know. It was wonderful, and it was wonderful to do it together.

How is it singing those songs without your brother Tops?

Nothing ever beats the originals. They'll never be replaced, no matter what Tops I have, who are very good, believe me. I'm past concert age, but we're still drawing, you know, full houses. I still enjoy singing and, don't get me wrong, I'm still a Top.

Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before.

You know, I've had three loves for the three different stages of my life. Really it was the Tops that was my first love. I was in love with [the Supremes'] Mary Wilson. And then the wife that I have now, we've been married 47 years, that is my lifelong, real love. They were all different kinds of loves.

Yeah, love has so many different meanings and different zip codes and zones, but they are love, and that's what I always build on, and the Tops were built on that. You know, we loved what we were doing. Believe it or not, money was not our primary thing when we started. In the back of your mind, you hope one day you will make some, but we just wanted to be able to entertain and be loved and respected. And we got that. Yeah, if they only knew, we would have done it for nothing! I don't think I've ever said that.

As told to Ian Harrison

I'll Be There: My Life With The Four Tops by Duke Fakir with Kathleen McGhee-Anderson is published by Omnibus on May 5.

Getty

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SAT 17 DEC LIVERPOOL O_2 ACADEMY

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TUE 29 NOV BIRMINGHAM O_2 ACADEMY2
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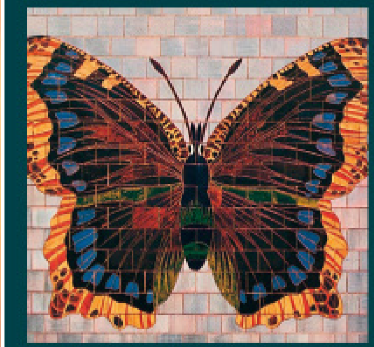

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Fri 04 Nov BRISTOL O_2 ACADEMY
Sat 05 Nov OXFORD O_2 ACADEMY2
Fri 18 Nov LEICESTER O_2 ACADEMY2
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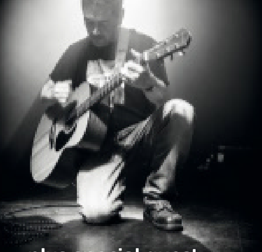

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FRI 1st JULY 2022
ARTS CLUB LIVERPOOL

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TUE 30th AUG 2022
O_2 ACADEMY2 ISLINGTON LONDON

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FRI 2nd SEPT 2022
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> **"Haitian culture has been stigmatised."**
> **LEYLA McCALLA**

"Music helped me process my place in the world": Leyla McCalla takes New Orleans' musical temperature.

LEYLA McCALLA TUNES INTO THE VODOU TRADITIONS AND ÉMIGRÉ STORIES OF RADIO HAITI

"IN HAITI, they call me 'blan', which means 'white'." Leyla McCalla, folk cellist, singer, banjo-player and first-generation Haitian-American, takes a moment to let this sink in over the video call from her home in New Orleans. "So I had all these conflicting feelings growing up. Who am I and what's my place in the world? Music helped me process that."

Despite a Scottish surname (from a Jamaican grandfather) and an Arabic first name ("No one ever knows where I'm from. Maybe that's why I'm shouting it from the rooftops"), McCalla is the daughter of two émigrés who fled Haiti to escape the murderous Duvalier dynasty. Now her fourth solo album, *Breaking The Thermometer*, finds her digging through the archives of Radio Haiti, the first station to broadcast in Kreyòl, to tell a story once hidden by a culture of silence. "Those who lived through these years were told never to talk about what happened," she explains. "A lot of this LP is about my memories of childhood and filling in the gaps."

McCalla puts her musical abilities down to a series of happy accidents. After trying figure skating, tennis and ballet, she picked up the cello. Despite studying classical music at university, a discovery at a party in Brooklyn changed her outlook. "I saw this band, The Voodoo Drums Of Haiti, with a cello. I hadn't thought it could exist in that world. You can play polyrhythms? Holy shit! That's a thing? You can bang it, you can hit it, pluck it, strum it? Sign me up!" Memories came flooding back of childhood and all-night parties in Port-au-Prince's storied Hotel Oloffson. She was hooked.

After graduating, McCalla furthered her musical education in the Grammy-winning Carolina Chocolate Drops, the Rhiannon Giddens-fronted old-time string band, then released two self-produced solo albums, 2014's *Vari-Colored Songs*, a tribute to the Harlem Renaissance's Langston Hughes, and *A Day For The Hunter, A Day For The Prey* two years later. Both blend Haitian folk with the sounds of Louisiana, the state she has called home since 2010. Her third album, *Capitalist Blues*, was a leap forward, bringing in New Orleans soul and jazz. Or should that be Haitian soul and jazz?

"All those Haitian traditions have had a huge influence on New Orleans, and *Breaking The Thermometer* gives me the chance to talk about that. I find it fascinating how much of that has been buried for so long. For more than 200 years, Haiti has been ostracised for claiming its independence. Haitian culture, and vodou in particular, has been stigmatised, vilified. Vodou, as a religion, is just about devotion. All the spirits are very human. Just learning about Fête Gede, for example, the crossroads between life and death, and how raunchy it is, so much sex and booze… of course that scared the shit out of the colonisers."

And is that what she wants to do to listeners?

McCalla laughs. "They could just dance in a frenzied way."

David Hutcheon

Breaking The Thermometer is released by Anti- on May 6.

FACT SHEET

- For fans of Rhiannon Giddens, Mélissa Laveaux, Arthur Russell.
- McCalla's father was the director of the National Coalition for Haitian Rights. "I was surrounded by conversations about Haitian rights and human rights from a young age. That had a big impact on me."
- The Hotel Oloffson, scene of many an all-nighter in McCalla's youth, is owned by Richard A Morse of the "vodou rock'n'roots" band RAM, who still play every Thursday. It was also the inspiration for the Hotel Trianon in Graham Greene's The Comedians (about Duvalier-era Haiti) and the haunted houses in Charles Addams's cartoons.
- On holiday in Haiti, a 10-year-old McCalla was instructed by her grandmother to interview the local children about their lives. "She wanted me to understand what life was like for Haitians. I was walking the streets of La Plaine and waking up to the sounds and smells of Haiti. That's what I tried to recreate on the album."

KEY TRACKS

- Vini We
- Heavy As Lead
- Heart Of Gold

Noé Cugny

THE SOFT, STRONG AND VERY LONG ASCENT OF CAROLINE, LONDON'S UNDERSTATED NEW POST-ROCK HEROES

A PUB FULL of drunk Millwall fans is not, perhaps, the best place to try out unsteady fusions of folk and post-rock. But in a rehearsal room above the Five Bells pub in New Cross, early in 2017, this is where caroline (the 'c' is written in lower case) made their first tentative steps. "If there was a match on, they'd get really pissed off and shout at us to fuck off," remembers caroline's Mike O'Malley. "The landlord told us, 'No more of that raucous shit while we're trying to watch football.'"

That "raucous shit" was heavily indebted to Mogwai, but the founding trio of O'Malley, Casper Hughes and Jasper Llewellyn saw a potential missed by many of the pub's regulars. Gradually, the south London band swelled to an octet, taking their time over an eponymous debut album that surfaced earlier in 2022. Caroline are, though, a band whose music revels in the uncanny power of a slow build. "We like a long, iterative creative process," admits Hughes. "We spend a lot of time self-analysing. It can be painful, protracted, stressful."

Hughes and Llewellyn met at Manchester University where, alienated by a scene dominated by garage-rock and post-punk, they'd play "sadboy acoustic guitar" in their bedrooms. Relocating to London as post-grads, they recruited O'Malley, who'd performed traditional folk songs with Llewellyn as teens in their hometown of Lewes, and formulated the repetitive, meditative qualities that would define caroline. "I'd worry, Is this enough? Do I need to come up with other chords or a change?" says Hughes. "But it was so liberating. I used to DJ trance-like house and techno at university. This had a similar feeling."

"We always felt quietly confident about what we were doing," adds Llewellyn. "But at first we didn't play shows. Our friends didn't know we did this. We weren't ambitious." On the down-low, however, caroline's evolution inched onwards. Amplifiers were swapped for acoustic instruments. Friends climbed aboard to add violin, clarinet, trumpet and percussion. Patiently, their minimal sketches blossomed into subtly affecting and occasionally cacophonic chamber-folk.

> **"We spend a lot of time self-analysing."**
> **CASPER HUGHES**

The unhurried pace of caroline's development also created poignant new contexts for their songs. "I wrote my lyrics for Good Morning (Red) in 2017, when I was campaigning for Corbyn," says Hughes of the song in which he sings, "How can I be happy in this world?/We'll have to change it". "It was a febrile time; it felt like there was a possibility for meaningful social change. When we perform that song now, I scream those words in a way that's quite desperate, and sad, and raw, because that hope feels extinguished."

Shortly before the pandemic, caroline signed to Rough Trade, solidifying their hitherto vaporous line-up and beginning the work of sculpting their debut album, their characteristically cogitative process only intensified by lockdown. "It was quite obsessive and painful at points," Hughes admits. "Sometimes I wish we could be the sort of group that could say, 'Yeah, that'll do'. But hopefully our process results in some good music."

Stevie Chick

caroline's caroline is out now on Rough Trade.

FACT SHEET
- For fans of: Rachel's, Mogwai, Jim O'Rourke.
- The album's closer, Natural Death, was inspired by Drive Your Plow Over The Bones Of The Dead by Nobel-winning Polish novelist Olga Tokarczuk. "I loved that book," Llewellyn says. "There's a part in the song where I'm imagining an encounter with Olga."
- Llewellyn says he "would be sad if people thought our music was merely cerebral. I get really emotional making our music. I nearly cried on-stage the other week. Our music has a general mood of melancholy and euphoria."
- The album combines sessions recorded in professional studios with elements captured via iPhone in their bedrooms and living rooms, and even in a disused swimming pool in Belsize Park.

KEY TRACKS
- Dark Blue
- Good Morning (Red)
- IWR

Wading in: caroline's creative process can be "painful, protracted, stressful."

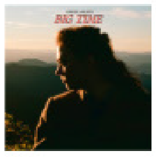
Douglas Pulman, Mickie Winters

MOJO PLAYLIST

Gird your loins! For the month's punk-disco, jazz flutes and soul.

1 JOAN SHELLEY THE SPUR
Strong Richard & Linda Thompson vibes permeate this, the title track from Shelley's eighth – and possibly best – solo LP. "Come on, ride faster now/'Til the old world's a blur..."
Find it: *streaming services*

2 THE CLASH AND RANKING ROGER ROCK THE CASBAH
The Beat's MC toasts with élan over The Clash's raga-dropper, in pristine audio. From a 40th-birthday expansion of *Combat Rock*.
Find it: *streaming services*

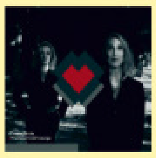


3 ANGEL OLSEN ALL THE GOOD TIMES
Giving it the full Patsy Cline, Ms O bids so long, farewell to the good times, her tremulous country-soul voice dripping with sad brass.
Find it: *streaming services*

4 HOT CHIP DOWN
Vintage soul loop gives way to punky disco grooving with the observation: "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." From August's LP *Freakout/Release*.
Find it: *streaming services*

5 CHARLES STEPNEY STEP ON STEP
The orchestrator of myriad soul fantasia (Rotary Connection, EW&F et al) caught alone in his basement, late-'60s, multi-tracking piano, vibes and drumbox. Gorgeous!
Find it: *Bandcamp*

6 MYKKI BLANCO FT. MICHAEL STIPE FAMILY TIES
Punk-rapper brings pained song of empathy with the former R.E.M. eminence. Check the video filmed outside a kipper-smoking establishment in Craster, Northumberland.
Find it: *YouTube*



7 XPROPAGANDA BEAUTY IS TRUTH
The voices of pop diabolists Propaganda return to their '80s electro-expressionist sound on new album *The Heart Is Strange*.
Find it: *Streaming services*

8 THE WAVE PICTURES BLINK THE SUN
With hints of Felt and Subway Sect, romantic indie pop about being in love on holiday. From new LP *When The Purple Emperor Spreads His Wings*.
Find it: *Streaming services*

9 JIMI TENOR BABY FREE SPIRIT
With primordial Roland beats, and jazz flute, the Finnish auteur envisages total liberation of the mind. From new LP *Multiversum*.
Find it: *streaming services*

10 THE LINDA LINDAS FINE
Angular, Sleater-Kinneyish guitars fuel the viral-hit teens' punk ire ("It's. Not. Fine.") Ignore them at your peril, patriarchy.
Find it: *streaming services*

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THE MOJO INTERVIEW

Music was his ticket out of Wallsend and helped him face his parents' deaths. No wonder he says he'll be making it 'til he's "too old and stupid to do it any more". What's his secret? "I like to work," says Sting.

Interview by **DORIAN LYNSKEY** • Portrait by **ERIC RYAN ANDERSON**

TODAY STING IS ENSCONCED AT THE LAKE House, the Elizabethan manor house in Wiltshire whose bucolic surroundings inspired his song Fields Of Gold. This is where he's spent most of the pandemic ("Not a bad place to do a lock-down," he says cheerfully) and recorded his latest album, *The Bridge*. He was touring *The Last Ship*, his stage musical about the shipyards that loomed over his childhood, when the world shut down, and he returned home to a blank slate.

"I didn't have an agenda," he says, settling down in front of a huge model sailing ship and an oil painting (ships again). "I just wanted to write songs. But having written them, I was looking for connective tissue and realised that all the songs are about people in some kind of transition. I think we're all looking for some kind of bridge to the future. I certainly am."

Sting has been building bridges to unexpected destinations for a long time. *The Bridge* is only his second album of new pop songs in the two decades since 2003's *Sacred Love*, during which he's released *The Last Ship*; a lute-powered tribute to early music maestro John Dowland; a Christmas record of hymns, folk songs and madrigals; a team-up with Shaggy; and two collections of old hits with new arrangements. However far he wanders from pop's main drag, this gold-plated catalogue (recently sold to Universal Music for an estimated $300m) means that he can always fill a room.

And what unusual songs they are. The former Gordon Sumner was 25 when he formed The Police with drummer Stewart Copeland in 1977, with guitarist Andy Summers close behind. They rode the punk wave without subscribing to its orthodoxies (too old, too virtuosic) and scored global hits with curious genre-hopping songs about stalkers and sex workers, astronauts and Armalites. Steered by Copeland's gung-ho older brother Miles, they promptly became the biggest band in the world and went out on top in 1986.

Sting segued smoothly into an even more unpredictable solo career. A reggae song about Quentin Crisp? Why not? An orchestral plea for Cold War détente? Oh yes. A Hollywood power ballad with Bryan Adams and Rod Stewart? OK, forget that one. Between his Dowland album and his Christmas record, Sting finally agreed to reunite The Police for what became the highest-grossing tour of 2007. He's had his cake and eaten it, too. "I get bored easily," he says. "For me, the essence of music is surprise. When I listen to music, if I'm not surprised within eight bars I move on. Maybe 16."

Sting is well aware that he rubs some people the wrong way. He's too pretentious, they say, with his ostentatious allusions to literature and history. And he's a hypocrite, they add: the rainforest activist who is also a jet-set celebrity. Perhaps it's partly because he seems to be enjoying himself too much. He's happily married to film producer Trudie Styler, has raised six children (including ➢

WE'RE NOT WORTHY

Branford Marsalis on sax with Sting since 1985.

"There's a lot of people who sing and write songs, but they don't have the natural musical instinct that Sting has. And that's as true now as it was 40 years ago. He just did this Vegas show, and out of 20 songs, 18 were hits he'd written! I think I've been lucky to play with one of the best in the business."

Palma Kolansky

actor Mickey and singer Eliot), and always looks about 15 years younger than he is. Last October, he celebrated his 70th birthday with a concert at the Parthenon in Athens. "We were looking for a venue that was older than me," he says with a rustling chuckle.

No party?

"I don't like parties. I'd rather be on-stage and be the centre of attention that way than blowing out candles. I like to work."

What do people get wrong about you?

The reason I wrote my memoir [2003's Broken Music] is because nobody knew about where I came from. I was brought up in a religious place with a shipyard at one end and a coal mine at the other. That gave the town an epic narrative and it bore fruit for me. These massive symbols – the ships, the river, the sea – all fed into my desire to express myself in a big way. I don't think people knew that. I'm not sure they know it now.

Was *The Last Ship* your way of coming back to Wallsend, the place you had been so desperate to escape?

The shipyard was a terrifying place: dark, noisy, dangerous. I'd watch thousands of men walk down my street to that shipyard every morning at seven. I thought, "Is this my destiny?" The guitar seemed like a key to escape, as did passing the eleven-plus. That separated me from my culture. Only four boys got to grammar school from my class of 43 kids. That schism is cruel and painful on all sides. I suppose writing *The Last Ship* was an elegy for a culture that I'd abandoned. I wanted to honour it, because those guys were immensely proud of what they built. Watching a ship being launched is apocalyptic. Something the size of a department store starts to move and there's this incredible noise.

In Broken Music you call music "a kind of birthright". Was it part of how your family communicated?

Well, my mum was a very good piano player. My dad sang very well and when they weren't fighting, they would actually perform together, but that wasn't very often. My grandad played the mandolin. My Uncle Joe was an organist in a social club. So music was part of my life and then when I discovered the guitar I found a friend for life.

How old were you?

Eight or nine. The guy who lived next door was emigrating to Canada and he left his guitar with me. It was a five-string, rusty thing, so I saved up for the other string.

And you learned songs by slowing records down?

Yes, and sped up, too. If you play a 45 at 78, you can really hear what the bass-player's doing. And if I wanted to break down a guitar solo, I'd slow it down to 33, or even 16. I realised that you can play anything if you slow it down. Eventually you learn to speed it up.

You saw a young Bryan Ferry play with the Gas Board. Later was it an inspiration to see another working-class Geordie break out?

It proved it could be done. Even someone from the North-east could make it. But the real permission was The Beatles. They were working-class grammar school kids who conquered the world with their songs so we got permission to say, "OK, let's have a go."

What did you get out of playing with the Phoenix Jazzmen and the Newcastle Big Band?

I was playing with guys in their fifties and sixties. They seemed ancient to me. Some of them *were*. We used to do these dinner dances and I'm sure the piano player must have been 90. The only information you'd get about the next song would be the key, and then they'd launch into these standards that they'd been playing since the year dot and you had to figure them out. You got five quid and a sandwich at the end of the night but what a fantastic way to learn your trade.

Did you also learn how to be a performer?

Yeah, because I was the youngest guy in the band. The trombone player made me sing a song by The New Seekers, which was awful. It was called Never Ending Song Of Love. So in protest I stopped wearing the band uniform, which was a bri-nylon pink shirt and grey slacks, and started to wear this stripey black-and-yellow sweater that my girlfriend had knitted. He thought it was hilarious and started calling me Sting as a joke. I'm grateful now because even though it's a stupid name, when you have to sign something it's very short and cryptic.

Your first band Last Exit didn't get anywhere. Did The Police feel like your last chance?

I had a wife [actress Frances Tomelty] and kid [Joseph]. I knew that if I didn't jump pretty soon, the window would close. And so we jumped. I gave up my job as a schoolteacher. I had a floor to sleep on in Battersea and I had one phone number, which was Stewart Copeland's. I'd met him at one of our gigs. He was in Curved Air. He lived in a very fancy apartment. I thought, "Wow, these guys are loaded!" Very quickly I realised it was a squat. He said, "I've got this idea for a punk trio, are you in?" I said, "Yeah, let's give it a go." Stewart was a damn good drummer with great energy and ambition. He got the thing going. I knew I could sing, I knew I could write songs, I was just looking for a suitable ship to stow myself on.

A LIFE IN PICTURES

Bass Face: Sting through the years.

1 "The guitar seemed like a key to escape": 10-year-old Gordon Sumner, Wallsend, North Tyneside.

2 Flaring up: Last Exit (from left, John Hedley, Gerry Richardson, Sting), 1974.

3 Call the cops: The Police (from left) Stewart Copeland, Sting and original guitarist Henry Padovani in 1977.

4 Getting things off his chest: (from left)Sting, Copeland and Andy Summers on-stage in 1979.

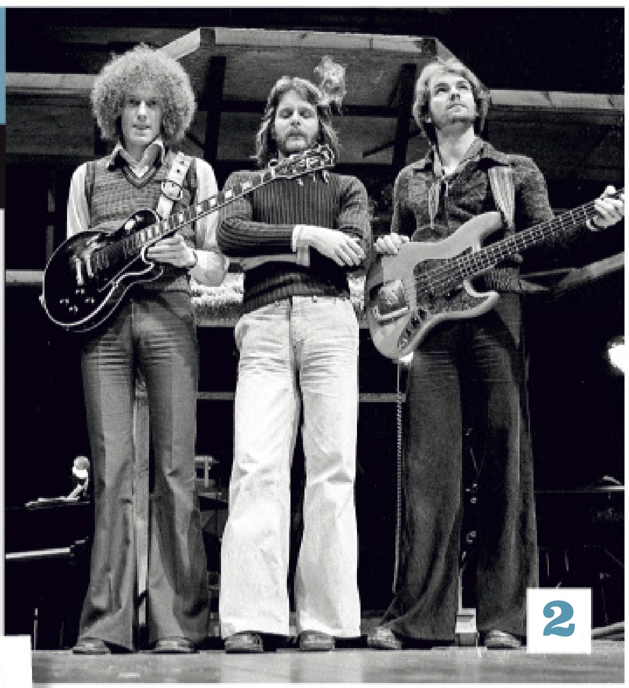
5 Going solo: (from left) Omar Hakim, Sting, Darryl Jones and Branford Marsalis circa *The Dream Of The Blue Turtles* (1985).

6 Having his collar felt: Sting as Ace Face in 1979 Franc Roddam-directed Mod drama Quadrophenia.

7 On-stage with Bruce Springsteen for the Amnesty International-supporting Human Rights Now! tour, Wembley Stadium, 1988.

8 Back in the saddle: Stewart Copeland, Sting and Andy Summers re-form for 2007's mega-successful The Police Reunion Tour.

9 Sting in 1982: "I'm not a purist," he says now. "I'm a gadfly, proudly. I like to dabble in all kinds of different music."



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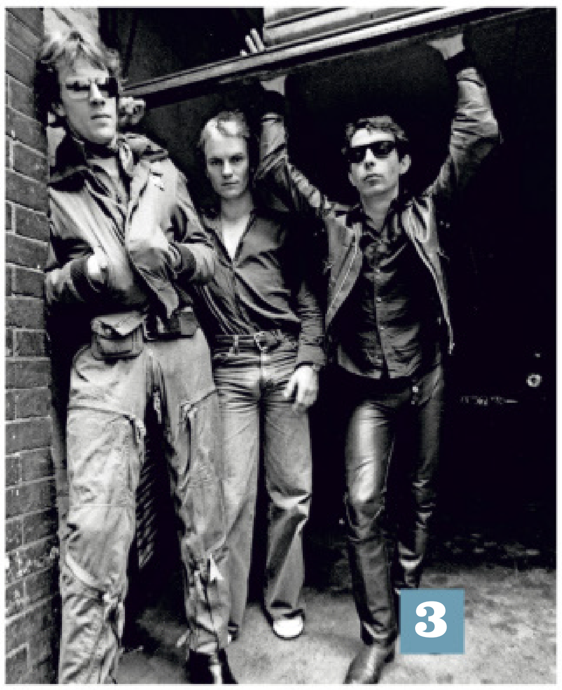

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Alamy (4), Rik Walton, Shutterstock (2), Getty (2)

Roxanne is a strange song – a kind of reggae ballad about a prostitute – but it launched your career. Did that give you confidence to try anything?

It did. Roxanne didn't sound like anything else. It wasn't a hit in England. I think the BBC wouldn't play it because it was about prostitution. And then some radio station in Texas picked it up and it kind of went viral. So we went to America, got a gig at CBGB, and then started driving our station wagon around America. The dream exploded around us. We got back to England as conquering heroes. We actually broke America when all the bands who had gone there with record company assistance and money, like The Boomtown Rats and The Clash, hadn't done the business.

Why was Miles such a good manager?

Like Stewart, he had that amazing American can-do self-confidence. I certainly didn't have that. I was amazed how they could make things happen. It was Miles's idea that we go to America. I don't think we would have had the gumption otherwise.

The Copelands were Cold War conservatives and you were a socialist peacenik. Did that political divide become an issue?

Yeah, it did. Miles and Stewart's father was in the CIA just after the Second World War and he'd say things like, "We stop wars happening by assassinating people." He also said something strange when we were very successful: "We're advancing our political views through this band." I thought, "Wait a minute, you're not advancing your questionable right-wing views through this band at all." So I challenged him publicly. The letters went back and forth.

Did you have friends in the punk scene?

No, I think we were outsiders from the start. Stewart because he'd been in a hippy band. Andy had been around since the '60s [with Zoot Money, and other bands]. So the pedigree wasn't there for us to be a dyed-in-the-wool punk band. It was just a flag of convenience. It wasn't until bands like The Specials and The Beat came along that we found an affinity. I loved The Damned and The Clash but we weren't part of that group at all.

When were you happiest in The Police?

I think those days of driving the truck around America. It was a real adventure. No record company advance, no support. We were out there on our own, living from gig to gig and making enough money for one motel room and a cup of coffee the next morning.

Why was that more pleasurable than the giddy heights of success?

Each gig has a particular flavour for me. I remember the dressing rooms, I remember the shape of the room, I remember the motel. And as you go up the ladder, the gigs become more and more the same. Each sports arena looks exactly the same as the last one. So it was much more sensational, literally, to be on tour at the beginning, when it was all new.

> "I'd watch **thousands of men** walk down my street **to the shipyard.** I thought, 'Is this **my destiny?**'"

You were often called pretentious even as Scritti Politti or Gang Of Four were hailed as post-punk intellectuals for even fancier allusions. Did that grate?

It's an interesting word, 'pretentious'. It's been thrown at me a lot. But we don't grow up unless we pretend something. I had ambitions for myself as a songwriter. I thought songs could be literate, even literary. I'd look to people like Paul Simon and say, "That's the kind of song I want to write, and I *can*."

Another common criticism was your use of reggae. Were you consciously putting on a quasi-Jamaican accent?

Well, I loved Bob Marley but no, I wasn't trying to copy Bob Marley. It just seemed very natural for me, and still does. Playing reggae as a bass-player, you're much more important in the structure of the music than you are in any other kind of music. I admired people like Jack Bruce, Phil Lynott, McCartney – bass-players who sang – because it's not that easy. So to all the charges of pretension and whatever, I say, "Look, I can do this. I can actually do my job." Pretentious? OK.

Do you resist the concept of cultural appropriation and the policing – forgive the pun – of the borders between musical traditions?

Well, I'm not a purist. Music is this spectrum of sounds and moods and technique. For me, the exciting part is the borderland between jazz and rock'n'roll, or between folk music and the blues. That's where it's interesting for me rather than being a heritage act for a genre. I'm a gadfly, proudly. I like to dabble in all kinds of different music.

Every Breath You Take is the most played song in radio history and has over one ➢

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"I always ask music to tell me a story": Sting waits for another tune to come along, The Bahamas, 2021.

"**Music is therapy.** It's allowed me, at the **most disturbed times** in my life, some **sort of solace.**"

< billion streams on Spotify. Have you asked yourself why that particular song is so popular?

Yeah, I've tried to analyse it. There's nothing particularly original about the song. The chord changes are similar to Stand By Me, the rhyme scheme is pretty moon-and-June. What makes this song tick? I think it's because it's ambivalent. Some people think it's a very romantic love song and other people think it's about surveillance and I'm not going to contradict anyone because it's about both. That's its dark secret.

In your book you call the decision not to split songwriting credits the reason for The Police's ultimate demise, but you also say you were bound to want your freedom eventually. Are both reasons true?

My frustration was I would have written an album's worth of material but also had to entertain these other songs that were not as good. Explaining to someone why their song isn't working is a bit like saying their girlfriend's ugly. It's a very personal thing. That pain was something I didn't want to go through any more.

Your recording career lasted just six years. Could anything have kept the band together?

I don't think any grown man can be in a band, actually. A band is a teenage gang. Who wants to be in a teenage gang when you're knocking 70? It doesn't allow you to evolve. You have to obey the rules and the gestalt of the band. As much as I love the Stones and AC/DC, it's hard to see growth in their music. For me, the band was merely a vehicle for the songs and not the other way around.

You've described symbolically handing the mantle of the biggest band in the world to U2 in 1986. How did you feel?

I remember the night well. We were all playing for Amnesty. We came off and I handed my bass to Adam [Clayton]: here you go, run with it. I didn't feel sad about that at all. I wanted to start again. I wanted to get that feeling we had in the early days when it was us against the world. Admittedly, I had momentum. Whatever I did, people would have been at least curious even if they didn't like it.

What if your 1985 solo debut *The Dream Of The Blue Turtles* had flopped?

Well, both Andy and Stewart had made albums without me so it was my right, too. I recruited a band from the jazz world and I was lucky it was a hit. I have no idea what would have happened if it hadn't been a hit. Would I have gone back to the band and eaten humble pie? I hope not.

Branford Marsalis, who played on that album, said around that time, "Guys like that, you never get to know." Are you hard to get to know?

Was he talking about me? Branford and I are still very good friends. I'm sure I had a protective aura around me – a defence, if you like. But I don't think Branford would say that now. Fame is a two-way street. Lots of projection goes on about what people think you are.

Have you ever felt like your celebrity, the *idea* of Sting, has got in the way of the music?

I hope you'll never hear me complaining about my lot in life. I'm immensely fortunate to have my career. I don't think Sting has got in the way of it at all. It wasn't my agenda to become famous but at the time it was the only way you could be a successful songwriter. You had to be owned by people's projections.

Reportedly, you didn't attend your parents' funerals in 1986 and 1987 because you didn't want to attract media attention. That seems like a horrible consequence of fame.

I'm not sure it's entirely the truth. I think I was afraid.

Of?

Of my family. I'd escaped my family. I'd escaped the childhood trauma. I didn't want to be dragged back into it, particularly in a ritualised sense. Of course, if you don't mourn traditionally, you're forced to do it in a much more protracted way. So on my next three albums I was still mourning my parents and in many ways I still am, because I didn't go through the ritual.

After that, you couldn't write lyrics for two years. How did you get through that creative block and write 1991's *The Soul Cages*?

It was realising that the only way I could be a writer again would be to go back and face that past: that house, that street, that community, that toxic relationship that was my parents. To look at it full in the face and deal with it. As soon as I opened the gate, out these songs poured, like a flood. I've always said music is therapy. It's allowed me, at the most disturbed times in my life, some sort of solace. Music is where I go when I'm a bit lost.

You've talked about your experiences with psychedelics like ayahuasca in the Netflix documentary Have A Good Trip. Are they also a form of therapy?

I've been taking them for decades now. There's a period when you are disoriented, afraid, and dealing with existential philosophical issues that will not go away. And then you're rewarded with a sense of acceptance and love and being in place in the universe. I was brought up Catholic but only paid lip service to the idea of religious experience. I'd never actually had one until I was in the jungle in a trance, facing demons and the idea of mortality and all the rest of it.

You've been acting on and off since Quadrophenia in 1979. Which performance would you most happily sit down and watch?

If it's compulsory? I got into it by accident. My first wife was an actress and her agent said, "You have a look. You should go up for this or that movie." And I kept getting them. I was in those films long enough to make an impression but not long enough to blow it. It's still not my vocation, even though I've made lots of films and TV shows. I don't bump into furniture and I can remember my lines but acting isn't in my soul. I did a movie [the upcoming Kaamelott: First Chapter] last year in France. They cast me as the king of the Saxons, who doesn't speak very good French and isn't very bright, so it was the perfect role for me. Sometimes I'm asked to play a version of myself, usually very self-obsessed.

Did you see the new Dune?

Yes, I think it's a work of art. (*Laughs*) But it's not as camp as our version.

Some people see a dissonance between your lavish lifestyle and your environmental activism. I don't know whether you still call yourself a socialist…

I do. Despite my trappings.

OK. So accusations of hypocrisy are easy but how do you make it add up on your own terms?

Having seen the destruction in the Amazon first-hand really didn't leave me any choice at all. This chief said, "You're famous, you can help me." It was something that I had to do and I don't regret it, although we got a lot of flak for it, like we were grandstanding and it was about ego. But actually it was just someone saying, "Can you do something?" and me trying. I'd do it again.

Eric Ryan Anderson

What did you expect from The Police reunion and did you get it?

I'd said no, no, no, no, no on numerous occasions but I thought my timing was impeccable. Any later I think would have been wrong. Any sooner would have been wrong. It was cashing that asset in, saying, "Let's do it one more time and see what happens." It was hugely successful but I wouldn't do it again. That would be a bridge too far.

So you don't regret it?

No, absolutely not. I mean, it was hard because the power struggles were still very apparent, but we got through it and people loved it, they really did.

Do you still talk to Stewart and Andy?

We always communicate on birthdays. We have separate lives but it's very cordial. I'm very grateful for those guys and their immense talent, and their patience with me. I love them.

Given that you're wary of nostalgia, why have you revisited your old songs on *Symphonicities* and *My Songs*?

I think songs are organic entities. They're not museum artefacts. They need life breathed into them on a nightly basis. So to find a new context for a song, to see how it looks in an orchestral costume or played by a jazz group, intrigues me. A good song will withstand that treatment.

Have you made any records that you really don't like?

No, I'm proud of all of them. I might hear snatches of them by accident and I'm always pleasantly surprised by decisions I made as a young musician. I wonder how I knew that. I was smarter than I thought. If you listen to records from the same period, you can date them by the synthesizers. It sounds like self-praise but ours seem timeless, which maybe was the intention.

What's a record that doesn't get enough credit?

It would be churlish of me to complain. There are records that were less understood than others. *The Soul Cages* was my least understood record and yet it's the one I'm probably the most proud of because it's so deeply personal.

I once saw Bono mistaken for you. Have you ever been confused with another singer?

I've been mistaken for Bono, Phil Collins, Billy Idol… I'm never insulted. I quite enjoy people not knowing who the hell I am. It's very relaxing. I know when people know who I am but are pretending that they don't. They go through a very odd, quirky dance. As I said before, you're dealing with projections.

Do your choices mean that you never need to retire, because you can make music that doesn't depend on big tours?

Well, I'm dying to get back on tour. I'll do it until I'm too old and stupid to do it any more. It's not dependent on having hits. Obviously. I haven't had a hit in a long time. But people want to hear me sing, so I do.

Are you ever stuck for what record to make next?

I finish a *song* and wonder where the hell the next couplet's going to come from. The whole process is fraught with anxiety that you can't do it any more. If I look back on the successful songs I've written, they all began as very modest ideas: a cadence, a line, a title. That's the first step, and then you take the next one. That's how it works. You put the hours in. You clock on at 10.30 and you work 'til dinner. I always ask music to tell me a story. Some people hear music and they see colours. I don't. I see situations or characters.

Do you ever worry about staying relevant?

Not really. Who's the arbiter of relevance? I'm a songwriter. Whether it's relevant or not to the world in general is beside the point. It's relevant to my own mental health to do this. The real purpose is to keep me on an even keel. That's my work, and without work I'm not sure what I am.

Sting's new album The Bridge is out now. Sting: My Songs, the live residency, begins at London's Palladium from April 15.

WHERE IS THY STING?

It's all here, in three albums, says **James McNair**.

ULTIMATE POLICE!

The Police
Ghost In The Machine
★★★★
(A&M, 1981)

Named for Arthur Koestler's 1967 book on philosophical psychology and part-hatched at Air Studios, Montserrat, *Ghost…* leavened greater lyrical sophistication with sunny Caribbean horns, steel drums and playful keys. These Sting-driven evolutions betrayed solo ambitions, but his plum pop writing was still beautifully served by Messrs Summers and Copeland on Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic, a joyous palette cleanser after stringent, politicised opener Spirits In The Material World.

SOUL-BARING SOLO!

Sting
The Soul Cages
★★★★★
(A&M, 1991)

Sting cured writer's block wrought by the death of his father Ernest by tackling his grief and their difficult relationship head-on. "You mustn't let people insist on cheering you up," he noted, weighing up *The Soul Cages*' solemnity. Saxophonist Branford Marsalis, new guitar foil Dominic Miller and six different percussionists were on hand to ornament the dark, introspective work Sting considers his most underrated. "Goodnight," he tells Ernest in its final seconds.

THE HOMECOMING!

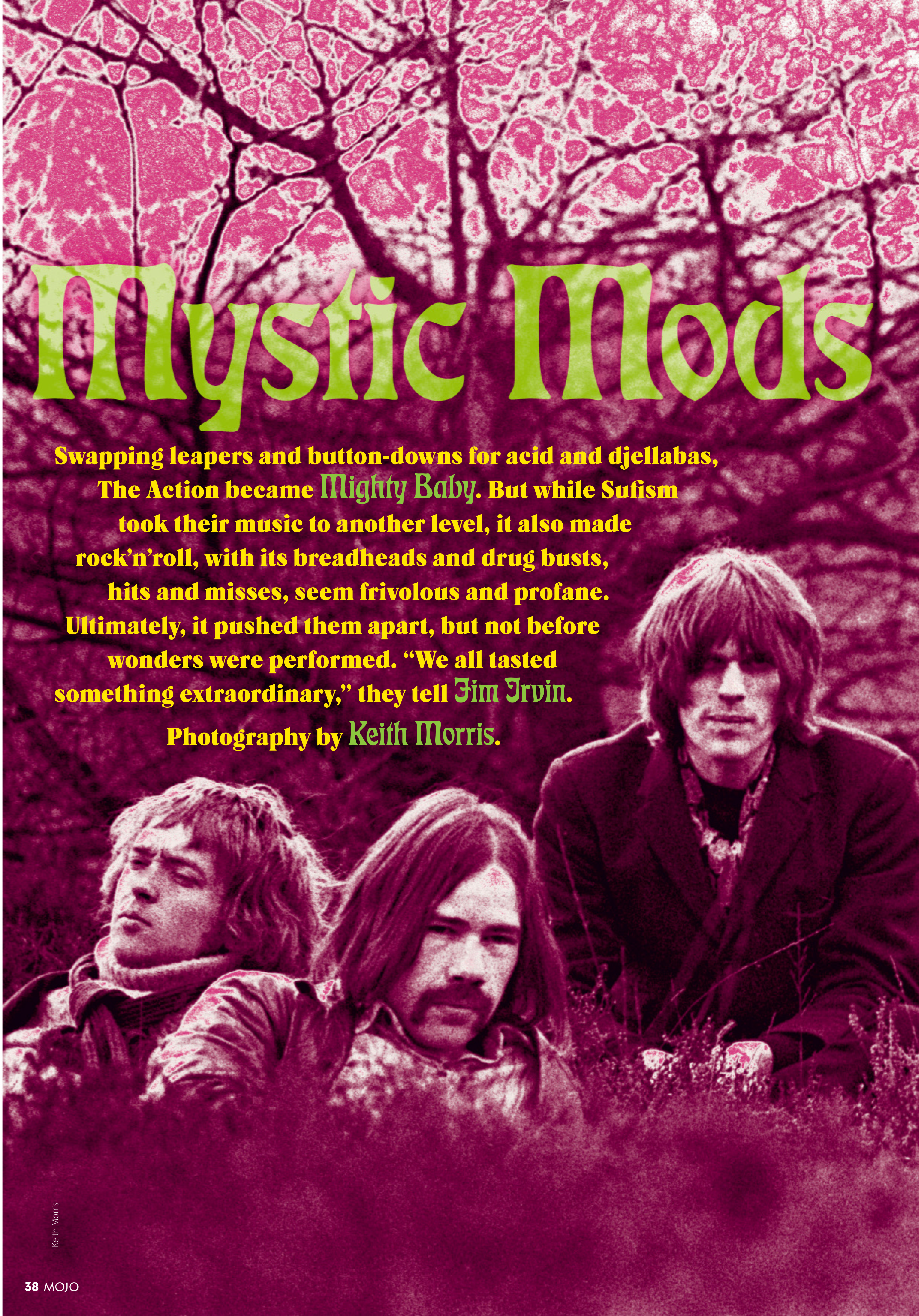
Sting
The Last Ship
★★★★
(A&M, 2013)

Brazen, some thought, to disinter his Geordie brogue, but Sting's lament for the lost shipbuilding industry of his native Wallsend was wholly seaworthy. Becky and Rachel Unthank, AC/DC's Brian Johnson and Northumbrian smallpiper Kathryn Tickell brought local colour to songs exploring community, homecoming and working-class rites of passage, while marriage of convenience conceit Practical Arrangement is a Sumner zinger. Next came the stage musical of the same name.

Mystic Mods

Swapping leapers and button-downs for acid and djellabas, The Action became Mighty Baby. But while Sufism took their music to another level, it also made rock'n'roll, with its breadheads and drug busts, hits and misses, seem frivolous and profane. Ultimately, it pushed them apart, but not before wonders were performed. "We all tasted something extraordinary," they tell Jim Irvin.

Photography by Keith Morris.



Keith Morris

THE ACTION WERE WORKING-class Mods from Kentish Town, north London, trusty purveyors of stirring beat music and Motown covers to a coterie of hipsters since the summer of 1963. The nick-names of two of their number – rhythm guitarist Alan 'Bam' King and bassist Mike 'Ace' Evans – spoke to their punchy pop aesthetic; singer Reg King (no relation) boasted a big, soulful rasp, and they were propelled by the thrilling drumming of Roger Powell, a friend and admirer of The Who's Keith Moon who would in turn inspire another noted sticksman: Genesis's Action acolyte Phil Collins.

By 1966 the group had been reinforced by lead guitarist Pete Watson, but two other arrivals flipped the script: *Pet Sounds* and LSD. Initiation into the latter came via Nick Jones, son of Melody Maker jazz editor Max, and in incongruously staid environs.

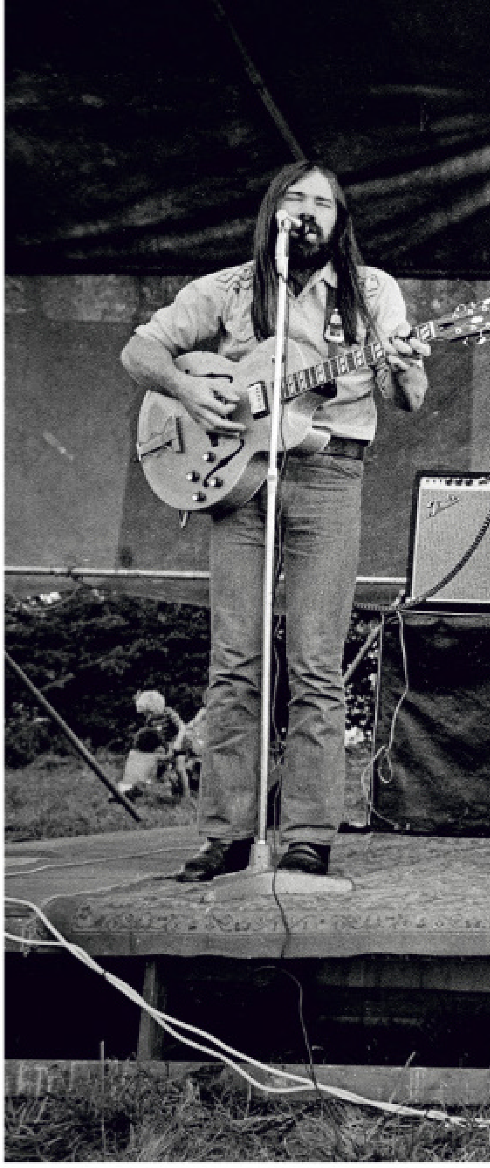
"We got turned on in Bognor," says Powell. "The Joneses had a cottage there. Nick got hold of some LSD, a big bottle of it, and Mike and I took some. Just one drop on a bit of blotting paper and you were gone for 12 hours."

The Action were instant converts. They were tripping, for instance, while promoting their July '66 single, Baby You've Got It on TV's Ready Steady Go!, which made them acutely aware of a hissing sound emanating from girls in the crowd whenever presenter Cathy MacGowan entered.

Other revelations were more profound. In fact, soon, the look, sound and even names of some of these young musicians would change out of all recognition. And the band they became – the four-fifths-Muslim improvisation machine called Mighty Baby – was one of the most extraordinary that ever failed to connect with a wider public. ➢

"Pioneers of a new frontier": Mighty Baby (from left) Ian Whiteman, Alan King, Mike Evans, Martin Stone and Roger Powell turn on, 1969.

Mod for it: The Action (clockwise from left) Mike Evans, Reg King, Roger Powell and Alan King, London, 1967; (below) John Coltrane's India, an influence.



ROGER POWELL PUTS the contrast between the two incarnations simply: "The Action was all about youthful energy, everything was very intense. Mighty Baby was more mature, more relaxed, more about enjoying the moment rather than making the moment."

By 1967, the seeds of that change were already germinating in The Action, and that year, with his bandmates increasingly interested in drugs and jazz, Pete Watson left. He was replaced by multi-instrumentalist Ian Whiteman, an architecture student who'd never heard of The Action but owned his own organ, sax and flute.

"We came from very different backgrounds," Whiteman tells MOJO. "I was from this rural, middle-class Quaker background on the outskirts of Essex, and they were working-class Kentish Towners. But it really didn't matter. In fact, for me it was a relief, because I spent all day with these stuffed-shirt architects. I wasn't enjoying it very much. I thought, I've to get out of this place."

Scoping the 'musicians wanted' ads in that week's Melody Maker, the first number Whiteman called turned out to be Roger Powell's. In a remarkable coincidence he found he was already living opposite Alan King.

"So I turned up to a rehearsal and joined the band without really auditioning," says Whiteman. "Next thing, I was gigging and plunged into showbiz."

Whiteman's arrival meant The Action could now attempt the kind of music they'd listen to in their dressing room. A long improvisation loosely based on John Coltrane's *Impressions* track, India (an influence on The Byrds' Eight Miles High) became a regular part of the set. But while the players enjoyed the challenge, singer Reg King felt sidelined. During a BBC session recording of India he can be heard shouting randomly about elephants and other aspects of the subcontinent, having little else to do.

The singer's drinking had been escalating over recent months: suppressed anger, perhaps, at the band's dwindling fortunes. The boom-time playing soul and Motown at speed-driven all-nighters was over. They parted with manager Rikki Farr. And no-one wanted to release *Rolled Gold*, the self-written, psyched-out opus they'd recorded throughout 1967. Contemporaries like The Who soared into the charts and flew across the ocean. Each time The Action tried to stretch their wings or their sound, audiences and promoters looking for an evening of dance music raised objections.

ON SATURDAY, MAY 11, 1968, THE ACTION AND THEIR friends Fairport Convention supported The Byrds at London's Middle Earth club and witnessed them perform two sets, one of all their hits with a typical Middle Earth light show, followed by a second, with the house lights up, of solid bluegrass and country tunes led by Gram Parsons.

"A lot of bands were using these big stacks, Marshall amps, but The Byrds had little Fender amps that were just miked up," recalls Powell. "We thought, 'Ooh that's nice,' you could really listen to each other playing with that set-up. So that changed the way we played. We got rid of the Marshalls and got Fender amps and it was a much sweeter, gentler sound. We started getting into West Coast things like Buffalo Springfield, The Association and the Grateful Dead. It seemed more laid-back and friendly, it wasn't heavy and in your face."

The laid-back memo had not, however, reached Reg King, whose increasing unpredictability drove Whiteman back to his architecture course. A new guitarist was recruited in his place.

"We did a gig in Walthamstow Town Hall," says Powell. "Martin Stone was playing in the Savoy Brown Blues Band and we thought, 'Oh, he's pretty good.' So I asked him if he'd be interested in joining us. He wanted to try something different from just playing the blues. And that changed things a bit…"

Influenced by the lyrical playing of Richard Thompson, Steve Howe and Peter Green, Stone, who died in 2016, would have a profound effect on the band and everyone in it.

"To me it was a great chance to join what was essentially a pop group that was expanding into a psychedelic group," he told writer and reissue curator Richard Morton Jack. "And I thought they were going to be huge – the next Beatles."

There comes a time in almost every band when they realise they can't carry on as they are. For The Action it was probably the moment in the Blue Lagoon Club, Newquay, on the night of June 3, 1968, when Reg, feeling redundant during the India jam, shinned up a decorative palm tree near the stage, which promptly collapsed beneath him. After crawling from the wreckage, he was chased around by irate bouncers before being escorted from the venue.

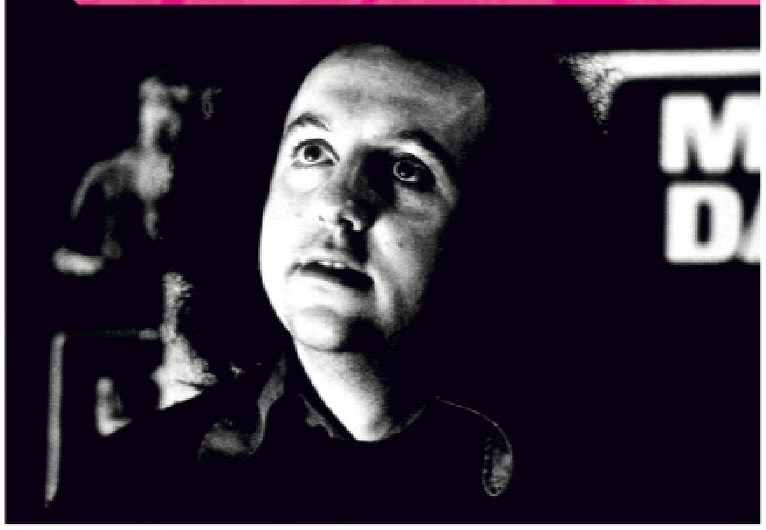
Watching this pathetic scene play out in what seemed like slow motion, his bandmates sensed it may well be his last act in The Action. At their height they could command £500 a night – a fortune at the time – but for this show they were pulling in just £50, £30 of which was now going towards replacing a plastic palm tree.

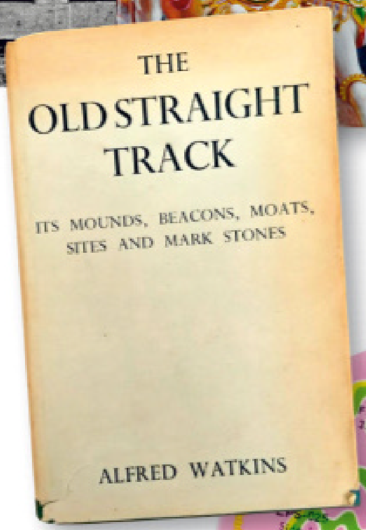
Alan King, speaking from his home in New Zealand, recalls the

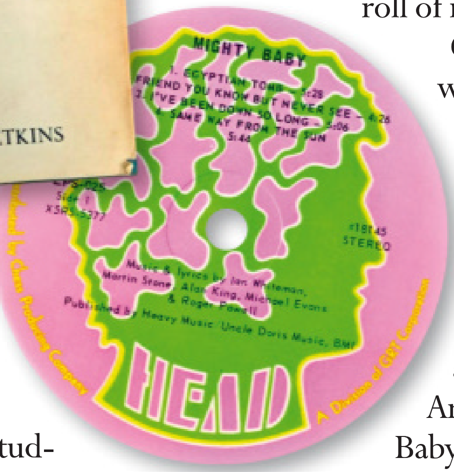
Getty (2), Peter Sanders

Sprog rock: (clockwise from left) Mighty Baby (from left, King, Evans, Powell, Stone, Whiteman) at the Cambridge Free Festival, 1970; producer Guy Stevens brought "loads of energy" to their debut album; literary inspirations Bhagavad Gita and The Old Straight Track; eponymous 1969 debut LP.

"I popped into Martin's room to find him with his head on the floor looking under his bed. I didn't realise he was praying."
IAN WHITEMAN







way The Action fizzled out. "I decided to stay in Torquay with a bird I'd chatted up. We all sort of split up there and then. Then re-formed a bit later without Reg."

REG KING TOOK THE TAPES FOR the *Rolled Gold* album with him, looking for a solo deal. Ian Whiteman was invited to return. "I'd missed them a lot," he says. "Roger would sometimes call 'Oi, oi!' up to me when they drove past coming back from gigs. I was only gone a few months, but Martin had already changed things. Everyone was reading books in the van. He'd arrived with a Les Paul in one hand and the Bhagavad Gita in another and that was sort of an announcement of what was going to happen."

Stone's extensive van library included philosophy, occult studies, religious texts and ancient history. Alfred Watkins' The Old Straight Track sparked a group fascination with ley lines. An attempt by Stone and the band's driver Harvey Baker to enter Stonehenge one midnight was thwarted when huge spotlights suddenly blazed on and a flustered nightwatchman advised them to clear off before the police arrived. "I was just in it for the music," says Whiteman. "But Martin, Mike and Roger were getting very involved in all this stuff. An OM symbol appeared on Roger's drum kit..."

The remodelled band hooked up with new management, Peter Jenner and Andrew King's Blackhill Enterprises, shortly after they'd lost Pink Floyd and Tyrannosaurus Rex but had won the right to stage free concerts in Hyde Park. The Action joined the bill on the second Hyde Park show in July, supporting Traffic, The Nice and The Pretty Things. "By that time, we'd invented a new way of playing, with Bam and me singing harmony together," says Whiteman. "Neither of us were confident or loud enough to sing solo. Bam would say, 'We've got one decent voice between us.'"

Demos of Whiteman songs led to a potential deal with Island Records and the band opted to change their name to Azoth. But when the relationship between Blackhill and Island curdled, both deals fell through. They ended 1968 with nothing to look forward to.

But then Stone met up with The Action's former roadie John Curd, who was now running his own van hire and management company from offices in South Molton Street, Mayfair. "It was straight out of Dickens," says Whiteman. "He had all these dodgy minions running in and out. One was named Feathers, who wore a voluminous raincoat and could 'acquire' whatever you needed from nearby Oxford Street for a modest fee."

"I think there was a bent insurance company on the floor above too," recalls King. "Curd was the biggest breadhead I ever knew. You'd always see him standing in the doorway holding a big roll of notes and counting them."

Curd offered the band a recording contract with his new label, Head Records, but recommended they change their name. Cream lyricist Pete Brown was asked to provide a list of suggestions. But when the band couldn't agree on one, Curd insisted on his own idea, Mighty Baby – an oxymoronic nod in the direction of Grateful Dead or Soft Machine, a trick he'd also use for naming Heavy Jelly. And so, in January 1969, the birth of Mighty Baby was announced with a Middle Earth club gig at the Roundhouse supporting Fairport Convention.

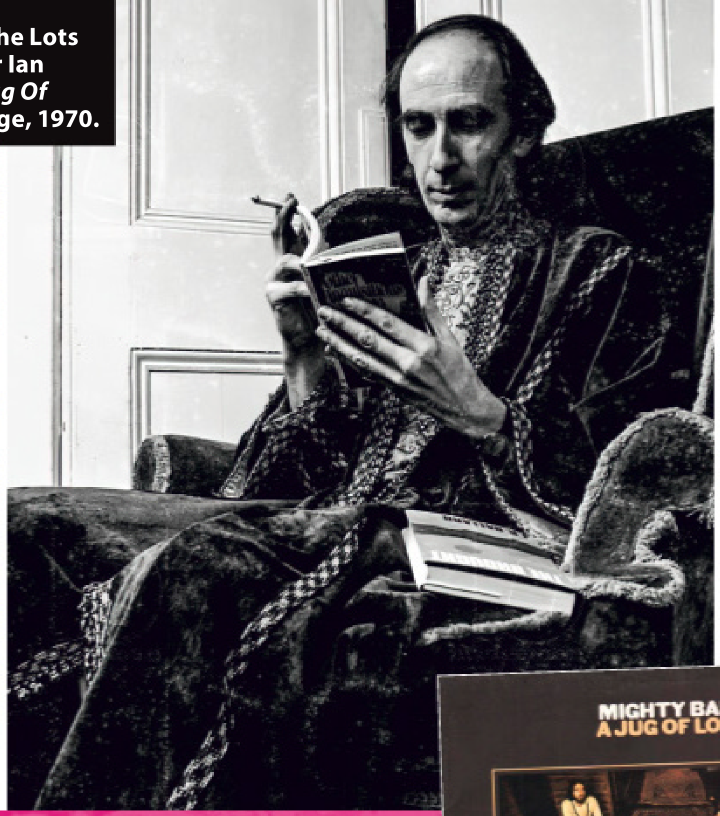
TWO MONTHS LATER, MIGHTY BABY WERE IN Morgan Studios in Willesden with scenester/producer/A&R Guy Stevens, recording their debut album. Whiteman: "When we got there I had a flute with me, and Guy said, rather aggressively, 'What's that?! I don't do flutes!' But otherwise he was great, loads of energy. The production values were fairly low, however, because there was no budget, we were in and out in two days."

Issued in a striking gatefold sleeve in November '69, with a bold cover painting by *Disraeli Gears* illustrator Martin Sharp, *Mighty Baby* is one of the great lost albums of the period; a facet of the shape-shifting, dawn-of-prog dynamic shared by contemporaries Traffic and Family; music rooted in R&B but revelling in the opportunity to go anywhere it likes.

The album was rapturously received in the underground press, but Mighty Baby were effectively guinea pigs for the fledgling label, not yet set up to supply record shops efficiently. And there were other distractions. One Friday afternoon, the band's roadie Mouse Haslett went to pick up their weekly pay packet, only to see Curd and his assistant being marched out of the offices by police, arrested for trafficking marijuana.

Times were tough in the empty corner shop most of Mighty Baby (bar Whiteman) squatted on Lots Road in Chelsea, close to another occupied by Family, both houses leaching electricity from a lamp-post. During this uncertain period they were kept alive by ➢

High and Mighty: (from left) Roger Powell in the Lots Road squat, Chelsea; actor/Muslim Sufi leader Ian Dallas, then Abdal Qadir, 1969; second LP *A Jug Of Love*; Ian Whiteman prepares to take the plunge, 1970.



Bridgeman Images, Keith Morris, Peter Sanders, Courtesy Roger Powell, Courtesy Ian Whiteman

> "It was hard turning up at student union bars, awash with dope and Newcastle Brown, and having to pray before playing." **MARTIN STONE**

playing sessions. Producer Sandy Roberton had a deal with Trojan offshoot B&C Records and cut most of his albums at John Wood's Sound Techniques in Chelsea, a short walk from the band's squat. He asked them to play on albums by Shelagh McDonald, Andy Roberts, Keith Christmas, Shirley Collins & the Albion Country Band and Robin Scott. Meanwhile, their Fairport friends invited Whiteman and Powell onto Sandy Denny's solo debut, *The North Star Grassman And The Ravens*, which led to work on John Martyn's *Bless The Weather* and dates with Hotlegs, soon to become 10cc.

The work fine-tuned Mighty Baby's psychic meld, reckons Whiteman. "You learn to see the strengths in what you thought were others' weaknesses and the weaknesses in what you thought were the strengths," he says. "It changes you. Music was the real alchemy."

WHILE HIS RHYTHM SECTION WAS PLAYING sessions, Martin Stone was otherwise occupied. After his interest in Buddhism and mystical philosopher George Gurdjieff was noted in the International Times, he was contacted by a man named Ian Dallas, then calling himself Abdal Qadir, a long-faced, fiercely charismatic former actor (he can be seen playing the role of a pied-piper figure at the end of Fellini's 8½). Dallas informed Stone that the roots of Gurdjieff's writings lay in Sufism, an ancient mystical branch of Islam. He invited him to his cottage in Devon for a weekend. "The next thing I know," Stone told Richard Morton Jack, "it's a week later and I'm in Morocco meeting the Shaykh of the Habibiyya, who gave me my new Muslim name, Abdul Malik. It was a dramatically transformative period of my life. I renounced everything – certainly drugs and alcohol."

At first, however, he omitted to mention any of this to the band. Whiteman recalls a 1970 trip to Switzerland. "In the hotel where we were staying I popped into Martin's room only to find him with his head on the floor looking, as I thought, under his bed. 'Martin? Have you lost something?' I asked, and when I got no answer felt slightly confused, but thought no more of it. I didn't realise he was praying."

Driving home along the autobahn, Whiteman was in the back of their van looking out of the window, when the driver braked suddenly. "Two of Martin's books landed on my head. A two-volume set, a translation of The Qur'an by Yusuf Ali. Big and heavy. Again, I thought no more of it."

Once the band became aware of Martin's conversion, Powell followed him to Morocco and converted too. "It was weird, but suddenly they were playing better," says Whiteman. Powell, always a musical drummer, seemed to have a new purpose. Stone would go on stage wearing a djellaba and a gold turban, with kohl on his eyes.

At the same time, work at Olympic Studios towards a second LP, to be titled *Day Of The Soup*, was well underway. Most of the basic backing tracks were completed and it was even advertised in some music papers. But it was scuppered, unfinished, by the disclosure of their manager's illegal activities. Found guilty, Curd was sent down for three years, effectively nullifying the band's recording contract.

BY THE TIME FLEETWOOD MAC PRODUCER MIKE Vernon stepped in to offer Mighty Baby a deal on his Blue Horizon label, a new batch of Mighty Baby songs had been rehearsed and road tested, some at Glastonbury on June 25, 1971 (their long India improvisation was released on the *Glastonbury Fayre* triple album as A Blanket In My Muesli), and all of the band except Alan King had converted to Sufism. They'd even helped their friend Richard Thompson to convert too.

Devotees are required to pray five times a day, and it was partly to ensure the neophytes of Mighty Baby were following the ritual correctly that an entourage of Sufi followers hung around Sound Techniques. Vernon was baffled and annoyed by all the time this took up. King, too, couldn't get his head around what had happened to blokes he'd known since junior school. He sensed a pressure to join them.

"I was doing the vocal for Virgin Spring," he recalls. "I wrote the words for that. I loved the Ingmar Bergman film. And one of the Sufi hangers-on came up to me afterwards and said, 'That's so mystical,' and starts going on about what it means, and as far as I was concerned, it had nothing to do with what he was talking about – it's just a song about the fucking weather. And he's saying, 'Oh, why aren't you a Muslim?' He thought, because of the words I'd written, 'Aye aye, here's another customer.' But I wasn't interested."

A Jug Of Love, released in October 1971, remains a low-key masterpiece; six unhurried songs, a beautiful account of a band of musicians achieving long-searched-for musical concord; the closest, perhaps, that a British group has come to the transcendent togetherness of the Grateful Dead. Yet reviews were poor – "Music for hitch-hikers and album sleeve designers with staring eyes and small beards," scoffed Melody Maker – and it sold almost nothing. "That album crept out and then crept back in again," laughs King today.

The band's faith felt increasingly at odds with the demands of a rock career. A tour to support the album's release in Holland coincided with Ramadan and proved to be taxing, physically and mentally. "We'd break the fast with a joint and a date," says Powell. "Which probably wasn't the best idea!"

Keeping the faith: Powell, Evans and Whiteman's acoustic band The Habibiyya, with (far right) Richard Thompson on dulcimer.

"It became impossible to reconcile the Muslim thing and rock'n'roll," Stone said. "Being in a band and being a Dervish were conflicting ways of looking at the world, and couldn't be merged. It was hard turning up at student union bars, awash with dope and Newcastle Brown, and having to pray before playing."

The influence that had taken Mighty Baby to another level, musically, had made their continuing existence untenable. "At the end of 1971," said Stone, "we just naturally parted from each other."

STONE EMERGED A YEAR LATER AS PART OF CHILLI Willi And The Red Hot Peppers with his old friend Phil 'Snakefinger' Lithman. Alan King joined former members of a band called Warm Dust to form Ace, who had a worldwide hit with How Long. Powell, Evans and Whiteman formed a new acoustic band, The Habibiyya, who made one album, *If Man But Knew*, for Island, and then became fully enmeshed in the Muslim faith. (Evans later found work in the film industry. He died in 2010.)

Whiteman, who will still answer to Abdal Latif, has published a book, Average Whiteman, about his picaresque progress living and working for Sufi communities in Norfolk, Texas and Granada, among other places. He still respects much of what he learned in those years, but came to mistrust Dallas – who died in August 2020 – when he began demanding his followers do extraordinary things to prove their devotion, at one point decreeing that eight men in the community, including Whiteman, divorce their wives. Powell, too, came to feel that Dallas's leadership was too intrusive and later decided that his life had been misdirected by him.

"When someone comes along and offers something healing," says the drummer, feelingly, "which at that time we were so desperately looking for, sometimes you go down a road and realise you took a wrong turning. There were good parts to it, but if I could do it again I wouldn't do it. It was a cult, basically."

Powell, who maintains an interest in spirituality, following Advaita Vedanta, one of the schools of Hindu vedantic philosophy, spent many years as a book-binder and restorer. Whiteman taught himself calligraphy and typesetting and became a book designer. Martin Stone became one of the world's foremost book runners – an expert at sourcing rare books.

"From the moment Martin's Qur'an volumes fell on my head in that transit van in 1970, my fate was sealed," Whiteman reflects. "What followed was not easy. I look back on my whole experience with Mighty Baby with great affection and true amazement that it could've happened at all. We all tasted something quite extraordinary. Its failure commercially was, in a way, its very success."

The best bands make it seem that there is more at stake than popularity, or even music. Mighty Baby were one of those.

"We were pioneers of a new frontier," concludes Whiteman. "We were able to cross an important bridge and get on with finding out what life was really about."

"They Were A Band Trying To Explore"

RICHARD THOMPSON was a fan and a friend of Mighty Baby and eventually joined their spiritual search.

"I'D SEEN The Action while still at school, 1965 at the Marquee Club. Reg was a good singer and I was always impressed by Roger Powell as a drummer. Then when Fairport Convention started playing the underground scene we were on a few bills together at Middle Earth in 1967. I shared a flat with some Fairports, and somehow an acetate of The Action's album [*Rolled Gold*] ended up there. I don't know where it came from, or where it went, but that was a really good pop record.

When I left Fairport, I had an empty diary but it filled up pretty quickly with sessions and I bumped into them all the time doing those. The first was Gary Farr's record *Strange Fruit* [1970] which was just me, Ian Whiteman, Mick Evans and Roger as a quartet and that went well. Later on, I booked Ian and Roger to play on Sandy Denny's albums. Mick and Roger together made a great rhythm section. Ian was a really accomplished musician, a child prodigy on the oboe, a Bill Evans kind of pianist and he also played sax and flute very well. Martin Stone always seemed to be at the centre of the music, he was in the zone, and I thought that was impressive. Mighty Baby were a band trying to explore. Like the Grateful Dead, they liked the idea of not having any barriers, of things unfolding in a different way every night.

I'd been reading about Zen and theosophy, Gurdjieff and heaven knows what since I was 15, and around 1972, when I was 23, my researches led me to decide that the Sufis were the people who had the knowledge. That seemed the clearest spiritual path to take. I read in Time Out that there was a Sufi meeting in a church hall about 200 yards from my house in Belsize Park, so I went along. There were about 30 people there chanting and singing and I began to recognise faces. It was Ian and Roger and Mick and they said, 'You must come to our centre,' so I did, and it all kind of made sense to me. At that point we became very close. We were following the same path. Martin, who had started them all towards it, had already dropped Islam by then. In fact, I think the band was already over.

Their community squatted half a street in Bristol Gardens in London and then moved to Norwich, and Linda and I lived there for a while. I didn't meet Ian Dallas for several months, and when I did I found him manipulative. Eventually he overstepped his authority. But I felt a real purity coming from the Moroccan teachers. Sufism is the spiritual, inner dimension of Islam, the prayers and the social thing is the outer dimension, like the Kabbalah is the inside of Judaism. In some ways you can't have one without the other, you have to balance the outside and inside.

> "Martin Stone always seemed to be at the centre of the music. He was in the zone."

There was a generational feeling in the '70s asking, 'Should we be looking for more sustainable buildings and lifestyles, more traditional ways of running communities?' We tried that in our little community, but we failed to come up with real solutions. It was very cult-like and it shouldn't have been. We were very inspired by the great Moroccan saints, but the UK version didn't pan out. I stuck it until about 1976 and then decided I couldn't live that way. I'm still a Muslim. I still pray. I'm a bit of a lazy Sufi, but it keeps me connected and sane, with a spiritual overview."

As told to Jim Irvin

MOJO PRESENTS

SHARON VAN ETTEN made her name turning bad times and worse guys into great songs. Luckily for us, she can still locate the "intensity" and the "demons" in parenthood and a caring relationship. Just no-one tell her mother. "I'm not completely dark," she assures VICTORIA SEGAL. "I'm just dark*ish*."

Photography by **MICHAEL SCHMELLING**

WITH A SUDDEN SKITTER OF CLAWS, SHARON VAN ETTEN'S ADORABLY tousled dog barrels past her, barking wildly at an unseen menace through the window. "Squirrels," laughs Van Etten, gently hauling the terrier remix away. "I was one of five kids and my parents never let us have dogs or anything because they said they already had too many 'pets'. My partner grew up with dogs, though, and our son's an only child. We're late bloomers, there's no way we can have another kid, so… how many people got the Covid pet?"

Van Etten and partner Zeke Hutchins – formerly her drummer – found their mutt through a Los Angeles shelter ("totally like Tinder for dogs") and the animal is now a vital family member. "I was bitten by a German shepherd when I was a kid," she explains, "so during training I was like, learning how to get over that by putting my hand in the dog's mouth and stuff. It's been a personal growth thing for me."

Domestic stability, dogs and all, is new creative territory for Van Etten. "I write because I'm trying to exorcise the demons all the time," she says, smiling as the sunshine pours through the windows behind her. It's a process that runs unmistakably close to the surface of her six albums, from 2009 debut *Because I Was In Love* – songs forged from the debris of a traumatic, abusive relationship – to her new record, *We've Been Going About This All Wrong*. Yet Van Etten generally eschews the heavy emotional baggage of "confession" or "catharsis"; her gift for communicating nuanced states of mind gives her writing a rare immediacy.

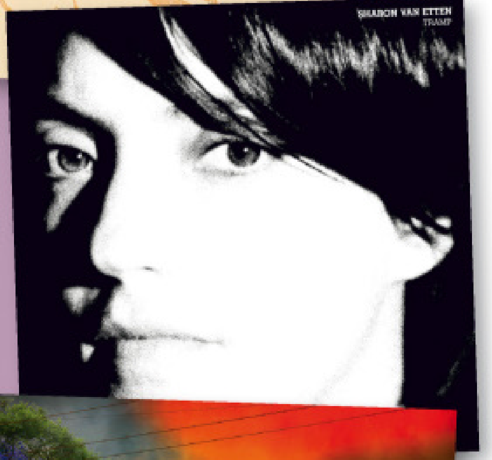
After 15 years in New York, Van Etten and her pre-dog household relocated to California in September 2019. The driving force behind the move was to write and collaborate more with her LA-based bandmates – but just as she completed her garage studio, "the universe called our bluff" and she found herself working in enforced isolation, struggling with all the quarantine classics. At night, she'd sit in bed with a whiskey while her family slept, wondering, "What are we going to do?"

Van Etten turned 40 last year and found herself "just thinking, What if I die first? What if he dies first? What if I'm not here and something happens…? I've never thought about that so much in my life." ➤

Michael Schmelling

Ray of light: Sharon Van Etten comes out of the shadows, Los Angeles, October 2021.

Woman in black: (clockwise from left) "I just love to laugh," says Van Etten; giving it a bit of screamo on-stage, Austin, Texas, 2018; debut LP *Because I Was In Love* (2009); *Tramp* (2012); new album *We've Been Going About This All Wrong*.



"I'M PROUD OF THAT GIRL WHO GOT OUT OF A BAD SITUATION AND WAS ABLE TO MAKE A RECORD ABOUT IT."
Sharon Van Etten

⋞ It was a period where, she says, she "dipped up and down with depression and addiction": "not like hard drugs or anything – smoking and drinking way more than I should and being called out and having to call myself out on it. Having to rein myself in like a teenager again. I totally beat myself up over that, especially as it's something I don't want my kid to see. Taking a shower before I go to bed so I don't smell of cigarettes in the morning. It's so ridiculous."

We've Been Going About This All Wrong is full of motherhood's guilts and conflicts. "I need my job/Please don't hold that against me/You are my life," she sings on Home To Me. Talking about her upcoming tour, Van Etten chokes up at the thought of being apart from her five-year-old. "He's at an age where every time he wakes up he looks bigger," she says poignantly.

VAN ETTEN, IT SEEMS, NEEDS NO SECOND INVITATION to feel bad. Here's a woman who admits to calling her mom every Mother's Day "crying and apologising for everything" – not just her teenage door-slamming.

At 17, Van Etten left her New Jersey home to study music recording in Tennessee, ending up in a controlling relationship with a touring musician. He was an addict who eventually spent time in jail and who didn't like her writing songs, trying to crush her by telling her she was no good. "I only wrote when I was by myself, when nobody was listening, for three years. I finished writing them after I left, when I felt it was safe to do so."

She had shut her family out completely for that period – "I can't even imagine, as a parent now, what that must have felt like."

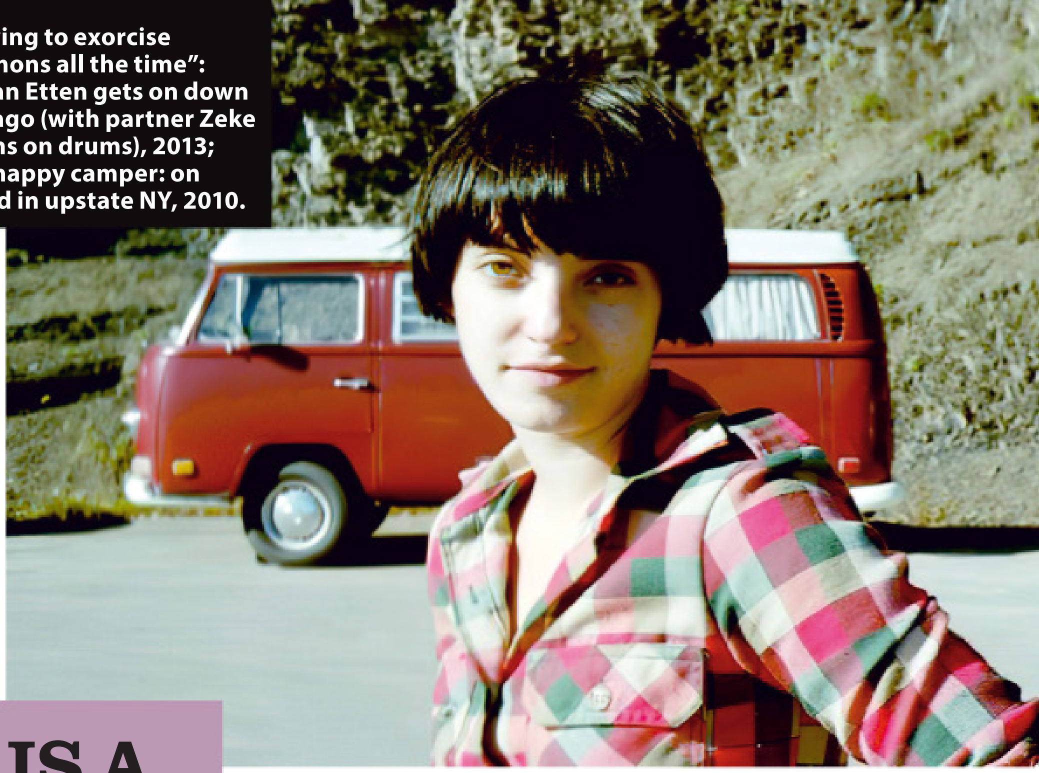
In 2003, when she felt able to escape the relationship, she returned to New Jersey, moving back in with her parents: "They welcomed me back with no questions asked." In between working in a wine shop and therapy sessions, she spent every spare moment writing and recording in her basement bedroom on the laptop her parents gave her for Christmas, filling notebooks and folders with ideas, ideas that would spill into *Because I Was In Love*'s songs, charting the cruel ambiguities and second-guessings of a dysfunctional relationship.

"I'm proud of that girl who got out of a bad situation and was able to make a record about it," she says. "I do look back and think, What a sweet little girl that got through a really rough period."

She describes herself at the time as a "fragile, sad, stereotypically abused woman" armed with just a classical guitar, yet she had surprising blueprints for how to channel her emotions.

"Believe it or not, I was more of a punk kid than anything back then," she explains. "I listened to screamo and I've definitely been at the edge of a pit." At The Drive-In; Cursive; Sunny Day Real Estate

Michael Schmelling, Getty (2), Alamy, Alaina Snyder/Courtesy Sharon Van Etten



"I'm trying to exorcise the demons all the time": (left) Van Etten gets on down in Chicago (with partner Zeke Hutchins on drums), 2013; (right) happy camper: on the road in upstate NY, 2010.

Acting up: Van Etten as Rachel DeGrasso in US supernatural drama The OA, 2016.

– these were her earliest influences: "I love how emotional men allow themselves to be." Yet it was P.J. Harvey's *Rid Of Me* that "flipped a switch in me. There just weren't many women I was exposed to who showed emotion in that way."

The relationship tracked its harm through 2010's *Epic* – a record about learning to play with others after being isolated for so long – but it wasn't until recording 2012's *Tramp* with The National's Aaron Dessner that she properly harnessed her anger. "I remember Aaron saying, 'I know you have a rock song in you!' and when I sang Serpents, he was like, 'That's what I'm talking about!'"

IF CATHARSIS HAD BEEN ACHIEVED, it was not immediately obvious from Van Etten's next record. 2014's *Are We There* featured the brutal despair of Your Love Is Killing Me and the bleak resignation of Nothing Will Change. It was, says Van Etten, "a culmination of an on-again off-again relationship of 10 years with someone I loved very deeply who had a hard time with me having success. I knew that whoever I decided to be with after that, whatever I did with my music, it would have to be OK. That wasn't something I was going to compromise on."

By the time of 2019's atypically synth-heavy *Remind Me Tomorrow*, produced by John Congleton (St. Vincent, John Grant), she had fulfilled that promise to herself and was in a relationship with Hutchins. Yet if the comforts of stability were clear – on Malibu, she is overwhelmed with love as her partner cleans the floor while listening to The Black Crowes – these songs still brimmed with new dramas of commitment and pregnancy: "intensity magnified," she says.

We've Been Going About This All Wrong zooms in tighter on this close-to-home territory, further intensified thanks to the confinements and tensions of recent years. Yet there are jokes here – "Sharon jokes" she calls them – such as on Headspace, a comedy of manners about sex in a long-term relationship, where phone-scrolling, washing-up and "10-year-old white cotton briefs" kill the mood.

"I've always loved comedy," she says. "When people hear my music, they don't hear that side of me but there's always a joke on the record. Almost every album title's a joke."

She namechecks Bill Murray, Eddie Izzard, The Office (UK), Seinfeld. "I just love to laugh. I used to go to comedy clubs all the time. I don't know if that's because I've always struggled with depression – I struggled with depression long before any unhealthy relationships. It came out as a teenager, not knowing how to communicate." She has an idea for a comedy show that she's contemplating – "but it's not something I want to be my life."

Van Etten feels the same about her acting – she has appeared in Netflix supernatural drama The OA, David Lynch's rebooted Twin Peaks and Eliza Hittman's Never Rarely Sometimes Always – although, as she laughs knowingly, she wants to take classes in improvisation to stop her gravitating towards roles that are "a dark female with a past".

IT WAS AT THE MERCH TABLE, HOWever, cornered by fans who wanted to share their own traumatic stories, that Van Etten found another calling. Wanting to advise but feeling unqualified, she decided to train as a counsellor – to help them find some light, she says, an impulse that threads through even her bleakest music. It's a point she makes explicit on a new song called Darkish.

"A friend a long time ago said, 'Sharon, you can be so dark, you know.' But I'm just dark*ish* – I'm not completely dark," Van Etten laughs. "The lights are completely out but there's a door cracked or a window open."

Van Etten worries her fans worry about her state of mind; she knows her mother does. "She'll call and check in when I put out new songs. I'm able to write these songs and then I feel better – that's part of the process. But she's like, 'I thought you were doing OK?' 'Mom, I am. I've had hard days but I'm OK.'"

LOVE IS A BATTLEFIELD

Sharon Van Etten's volleys of song. **Victoria Segal** ducks and covers.

BECAUSE I WAS IN LOVE

★★★★

(Language Of Stone, 2009)

In communion with early Smog and Elliott Smith, Van Etten's haunted voice and guitar sketched out the treacherous imbalances of an abusive relationship, and on Same Dream and Consolation Prize, charged them with luminous beauty.

EPIC

★★★★

(Ba Da Bing, 2010)

Looking her past in the eye, marking out a new future, *Epic* began with A Crime's bold defiance – "never let myself love like that again." 2021's *Epic Ten* reissue included covers by Idles, Fiona Apple and Courtney Barnett.

TRAMP

★★★★

(Jagjaguwar, 2012)

Produced by The National's Aaron Dessner, giving Van Etten all the space and time she needed. The Cat Power-like Give Out and psychic purge of Serpents ("you'll stay frozen in time") were further exorcisms of past harms.

ARE WE THERE

★★★★

(Jagjaguwar, 2014)

A painful transition of a record, with Your Love Is Killing Me and Break Me, this contains some of Van Etten's most untethered vocals and most visceral – yet beautiful – songwriting. No question mark.

REMIND ME TOMORROW

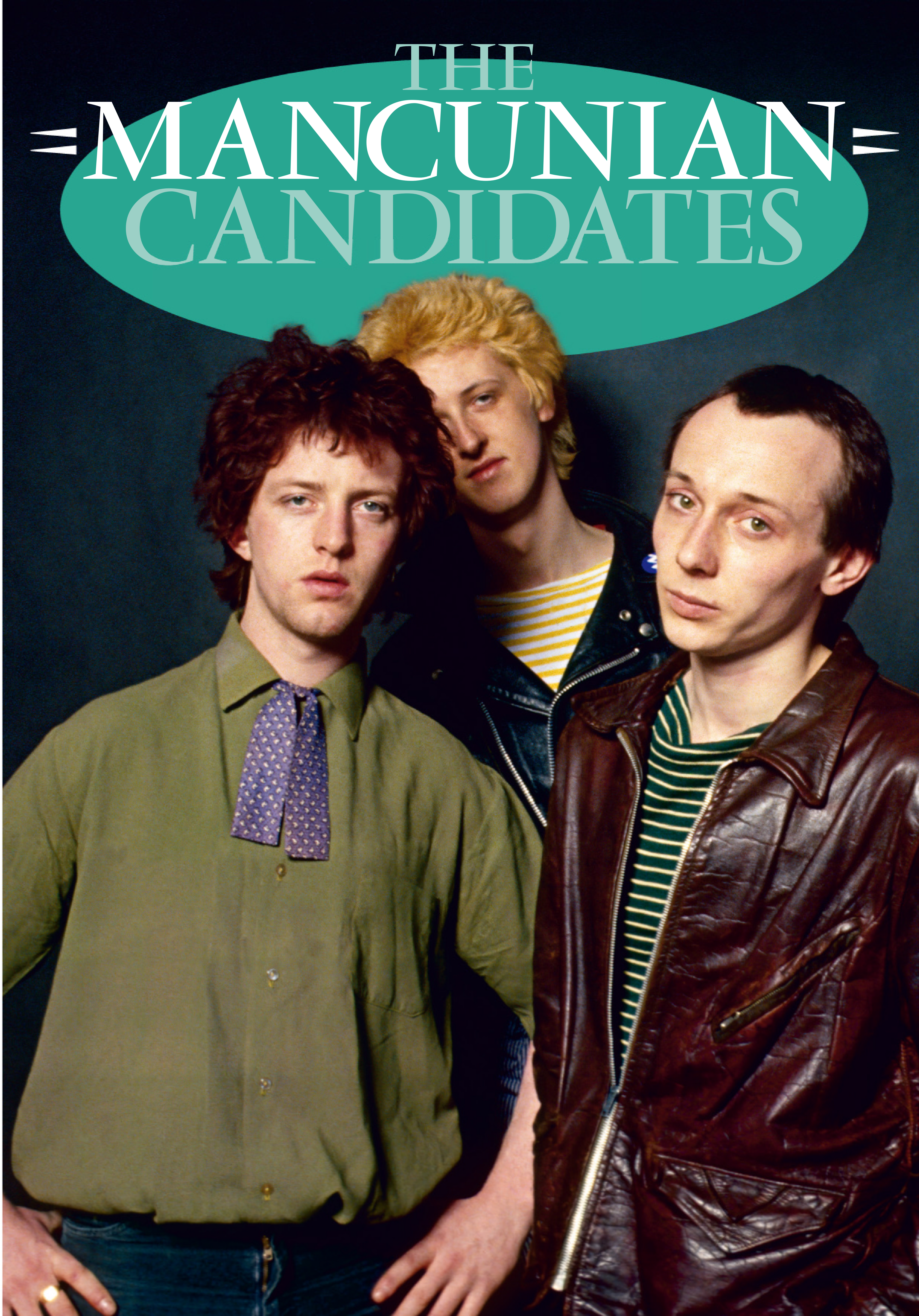
★★★★

(Jagjaguwar, 2019)

Produced by John Congleton, Van Etten's fifth album felt like a break with the past, musically and personally. Comeback Kid and Seventeen showed she could even deliver stylish – yet devastating – synth-pop hits.

We've Been Going About This All Wrong is reviewed on page 84.

THE MANCUNIAN CANDIDATES



MAGAZINE'S EXISTENTIAL SOUNDTRACKS HAD FRONTMAN HOWARD DEVOTO ACCLAIMED AS 'THE MOST IMPORTANT MAN ALIVE', YET THEY'RE OFTEN REDACTED FROM POST-PUNK'S OFFICIAL HISTORY. AS A NEW BOOK ABOUT THE GROUP'S TRAGIC-GENIUS GUITARIST JOHN McGEOCH EMERGES, DEVOTO AND THE GROUP'S SLEEPER AGENTS LINE UP FOR A DE-BRIEF. "THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN MEETS THE EYE," THEY TELL IAN HARRISON. PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADRIAN BOOT.

Out of the darkness: Magazine in 1978 (from left) John McGeoch, Martin Jackson, Howard Devoto, Barry Adamson, Dave Formula.

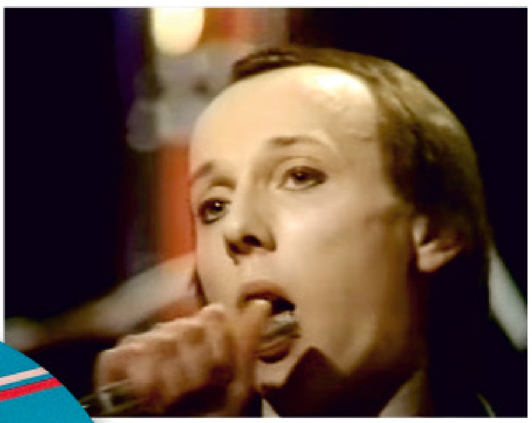
Adrian Boot/urbanimage.tv

FEBRUARY 16, 1978's TOP OF THE POPS WAS A STAR-PACKED affair, full of songs that would long outlive their moment: Kate Bush's Wuthering Heights, the Bee Gees' Stayin' Alive and, at Number 1, ABBA's Take A Chance On Me.

Lurking outside the Top 40 but afforded a slot that week were Magazine, whose cold, brilliant debut single, Shot By Both Sides, stood at Number 43. The song had been sparked when vocalist Howard Devoto's girlfriend told him his refusal to choose a political master would see him liquidated by both left and right when the revolution came. Its paranoid aura was exemplified by a doomy, jagged riff played by guitarist John McGeoch.

Generation X, The Jam and The Adverts had been on in recent weeks, but this was a different kind of punk. Exuding aloof intelligence, the stock-still Devoto's corpse-white face, eyeliner and widow's peak made him resemble Roxy-era Eno's evil twin, as he transmitted a negative charisma contemptuous of the whole humiliating farrago. Singles usually went up the charts after a TOTP showcase: not this one, which dropped three places and then inexplicably rose again to peak at the cruellest number – 41. Why didn't Devoto aim to please that night?

"There's more to it than meets the eye," Magazine bassist Barry Adamson tells MOJO. "I almost think there's a beautifully executed kind of self-sabotage there, which was Howard's calling card in some ways. To do that on the big stage is the thing that would keep your ➢

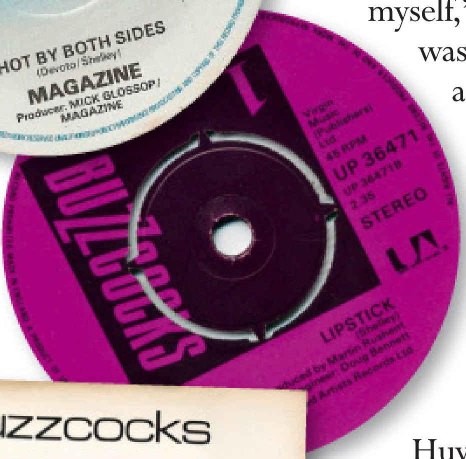


narcissism alive. It was, 'I can give you this, and I can take it away from you at the same time. And that's where my power is.'"

Devoto's preoccupation with the workings of power, the singer reflects today, was a leitmotif of early Magazine: "It was, 'Yes, I've got a bit of power now, and life is transformed and definitely for the better, but depressingly it still doesn't feel that great.'"

Rolling Stone's Greil Marcus called Shot By Both Sides "the best rock and roll record of 1978, punk or otherwise – and Devoto's Magazine may be the band to fill the vacuum the Sex Pistols have left." But TOTP would be it for Magazine and the wider tea-time-viewing world, and 44 years on they seem erased from the post-punk record, like some disgraced minister surgically disappeared from a portrait in Stalin's USSR.

"To me, the whole thing is summed up with that Top Of The Pops performance," says Simon Draper, co-founder and A&R of the group's record label, Virgin. "It was a compromise, and maybe he shouldn't have exposed himself to this ghastly scrutiny. That's the one decision that he got wrong, big time. Because if that record had been a big hit, which it should have been – everything could have been different."



AS ONE DOES, THE MAN BORN HOWARD Trafford is relating to MOJO the telling child-care advice given to his, and many other, parents in the 1950s: "When the baby cries, don't give into him."

Magazine attempt some "fast or slow music", Pennine Studios, Oldham, (from left) Bob Dickinson, Devoto, Adamson, McGeoch, September 7, 1977.

Born in Scunthorpe, the first child in a middle-class home, he hit upon his manifesto for living at a young age. "When I was about nine, around the time I got that all-important first Shadows record, I learned how to withdraw myself," he explains, "to get my own back I suppose. It was a Saturday morning and I'd been subjected to a minor disappointment – but it tipped me into… let's call it a lethally charged equanimity. A Buddhist super-sulk on the sofa in the front room. It was an important moment, a turning point, I've always known that. It was how I was going to deal with some of life's little inconveniences from then on. But it didn't always work, so sometimes I got angry."

Primed by literary influences including Huysmans' Decadent masterpiece Against Nature, Gerard Manley Hopkins and Samuel Beckett, and such musical cues as The Stooges, Bowie and Alice Cooper, Trafford was prime material for punk. His cornerstone position in the music's UK explosion is a familiar yarn: after he and Bolton Institute of Technology friend Peter McNeish saw the Sex Pistols in February 1976, they decided to form the Buzzcocks, with McNeish becoming Pete Shelley (the name intended for him had he been a girl) and Trafford reborn as Howard Devoto (variously explained as the Latin verb to bewitch or curse, or the name of a Cambridge bus driver in a story told by his philosophy lecturer). After they booked the Pistols to play two scene-igniting gigs at Manchester's Lesser Free Trade Hall in June '76, Buzzcocks' self-released January 1977 Spiral Scratch EP became a totem of regional, DIY autonomy and the foundation stone of indie.

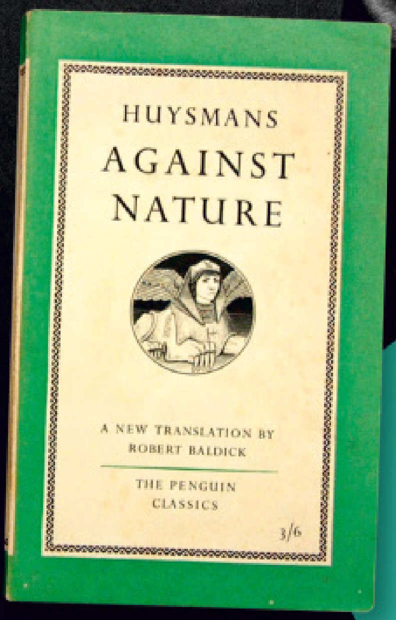
Yet just days after the release of Spiral Scratch, wherein the mockney-voiced Devoto sang gleefully of Boredom and how Time's Up, he announced he was quitting. The Roxy had just opened, The Clash's White Riot tour was about to begin and God Save The Queen would not be released for another three months: already he was in scorched-earth mode, declaring, "I don't like most of this new wave music… what was once unhealthily fresh is now a clean old hat."

Buzzcocks continued without him. As Shelley told this writer in 2014, the group changed "because we didn't have Howard to contend with. It was like 'teacher's out' in class… it was a great liberation for me. It could become more of the pop sensation I wanted it to be." "I never regretted it," Devoto maintained.

Yet, helping out with Buzzcocks' management and sharing a house on Salford's Lower Broughton Road with the band's manager Richard Boon among others, Devoto continued to write with Shelley. One session threw up a nosediving-upwards guitar line which Shelley gifted to his former bandmate (Devoto would declare himself irked when the same part ended up in Buzzcocks

Kevin Cummins/Getty, Adrian Boot/Urbanimage.tv

Edgy kid: Howard Devoto perfects his definitive gaze during the *Real Life* sleeve photo shoot; (above) in the frame for Shot By Both Sides on Top Of The Pops, February 16, 1978, with presenter Kid Jensen (far left) and McGeoch playing its epochal riff.



B-side Lipstick late in 1978). With Shot By Both Sides now written, an ad went up in Manchester's Virgin record shop asking for musicians to "record fast or slow music. Punk mentality not essential."

> "AS FOR MY ROLE IN THE BAND, PERHAPS 'BENIGN DICTATOR' PUTS IT AS WELL AS ANYTHING."
> HOWARD DEVOTO

CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF MAGAZINE WERE SOON colliding. Greenock-born guitarist, sax player and fine art student John McGeoch, whom Devoto had been introduced to by designer Malcolm Garrett at a house party in April, impressed with his ability to play all the guitar parts on Television's *Marquee Moon* LP. Locking in with punk-attitude drummer Martin Jackson, Moss Side's bass novice Barry Adamson likened joining the group to stepping into a film ("Orson Welles, Hitchcock, particularly Bernard Herrmann," he notes).

Keyboard player Bob Dickinson stayed long enough to co-write assassination tableau Motorcade, which he played live with Magazine at the Elizabethan Ballroom in Belle Vue on Tony Wilson's So It Goes ITV show broadcast on December 4. Says Adamson: "I remember Howard saying something like, 'He's got to go. As the *main* man, that's what I say is going to happen.' And I thought, 'main man', isn't that the name of David Bowie's management? I found that quite funny, but it was sad to watch."

Replacement Dave Tomlinson, who'd enjoyed a Number 11 hit in 1966 with a cover of The Beatles' Girl as a member of Manc-Mods St Louis Union, was advised to watch his back by his friend and Buzzcocks/Joy Division producer Martin Hannett, whom he'd met while backing comedian Faith Brown on cabaret dates.

"I was way too old to be a punk," says the man better known as Dave Formula, who joined after a lengthy intense pub interview with Devoto, and adopted his new wave handle from a sign at a south Manchester petrol station. "But I was sure I could do something with this music. I had this ARP Odyssey synthesizer which ➢

The ones who got away: (clockwise from far left) Devoto with Linder Sterling, June 1977; Adamson, Devoto and McGeoch on the verge in America, 1979; Magazine on-stage in 1978; Manc Mod squad St Louis Union in 1966, with (front, centre) Dave Formula; (inset, bottom) Howard Devoto's 'thank you' letter and £10 cheque to Sounds journalist Dave McCullough.

⋞ until then I'd really just titted about with, so I had to get my act together very quickly so I could incorporate it properly."

Having signed to Virgin in October 1977, the group recorded debut album *Real Life* with producer John Leckie early the next year. Formula's polyphonic synths may have been heretical to punk, but like McGeoch's cliché-averse guitars, they were central to Magazine's futurist sound, which came filtered through influences including Bowie, The Velvet Underground, Roxy Music, film soundtracks and Cockney Rebel.

With detached but grandiose group compositions such as the symphonic/snide Definitive Gaze and murderously ascending Shelley co-write The Light Pours Out Of Me, it reached Number 29 in July's UK albums chart and received serious praise. Melody Maker decreed, "No one who has the slightest interest in the present and future of rock'n'roll should rest until they've heard *Real Life*." The headline for a Paul Morley review in NME the following year, meanwhile, went even further: 'Devoto: The Most Important Man Alive.'

"That modest sentence is what the sub-editor seized on to hype up the article," protests Devoto today. "If the review itself had been red-hot glowing 'tonight at the 100 Club Devoto revealed himself to be the most important man alive' then I might have quickly developed even more psychological complications than I already had."

So he didn't take the title *entirely* seriously?

"Anyone who read past the headline could see it was mischief. Of course that wasn't to stop the Virgin press office – no doubt with my enthusiastic approval – playing with the phrase for quite a while."

WHEN THE MOST IMPORTANT MAN Alive and his group cast about for a producer for their second album, they nearly secured James Bond soundtrack supremo John Barry. Though Barry was up for it, the plan for Magazine to relocate to Los Angeles for the recording was deemed too expensive. When second choice Tony Visconti was busy, *Secondhand Daylight* would ultimately be recorded in the cold of an English winter with Colin Thurston and new 19-year-old drummer John Doyle.

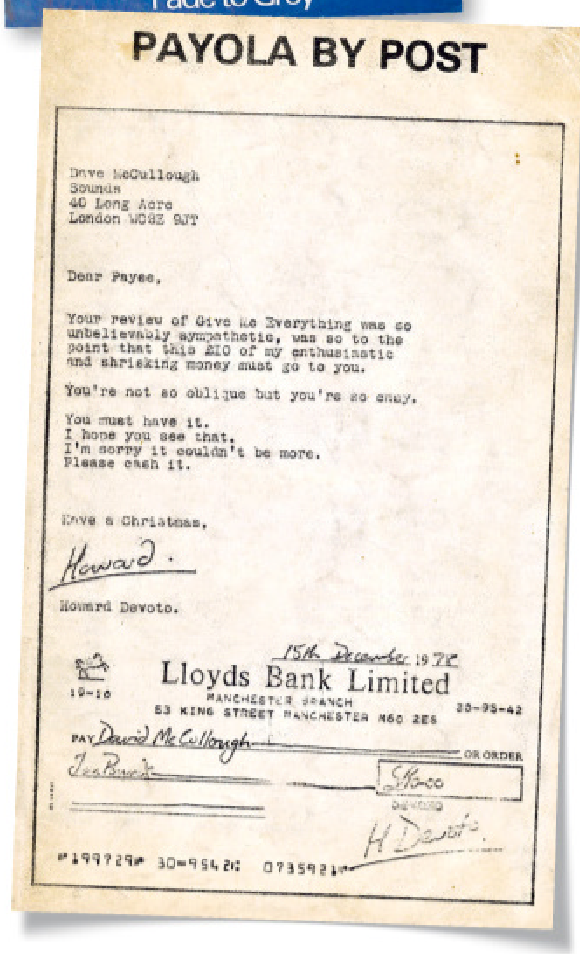
Beginning with the terminal Feed The Enemy, an Iron Curtain lament sparked by a trip to East Berlin while supporting Patti Smith, the LP saw the synths eclipsing guitars. Yet in his climactic, limitless solo for the horrific Permafrost, McGeoch staked his claim with a defining Magazine moment.

Doyle remembers sitting with Adamson as he played it, "jaws on the floor, hairs on the back of the neck standing up." Adamson recalls: "[McGeoch] was embracing what's going on with the song and then deciding to completely overshadow everything in that song… it's his moment."

Yet for all its ambition and sophistication – it's Adamson's favourite Magazine album – *Secondhand Daylight*'s release provoked icy notices, and it stalled at Number 38. "It polarised some people, because they thought of it as being too prog rock," says Simon Draper, observing that the group's press honeymoon was over. "Also, what I didn't realise was that Howard, in a way, was going to be his own worst enemy in terms of commercial success. He did take himself very, very seriously and his relationship with the press was sort of intriguing, but he antagonised a lot of fairly pretentious young journalists who wanted to be taken seriously themselves. He sent one [the late Dave McCullough of Sounds] a £10 cheque marked 'Payola By Post', which meant 'Fuck Off' basically."

There were other disturbances to contend with. Some time after the restless Jackson departed in summer '78, Adamson began a secret, exploratory affair with artist Linder Sterling, Devoto's on-off paramour and the designer of the sleeve for *Real Life*. Inevitably, Devoto found out.

"I was 19 and I was ferociously in



PAYOLA BY POST

Dave McCullough
Sounds
40 Long Acre
London WC2E 9JT

Dear Payee,

Your review of Give Me Everything was so unbelievably sympathetic, was so to the point that this £10 of my enthusiastic and shrieking money must go to you.

You're not so oblique but you're so easy.

You must have it.
I hope you see that.
I'm sorry it couldn't be more.
Please cash it.

Have a Christmas,

Howard.

Howard Devoto.

15th December 1978

Lloyds Bank Limited
Manchester Branch
53 King Street Manchester M60 2ES
30-95-42

Pay David McCullough or order
Ten Pounds
£10-00
H Devoto

Kevin Cummins/Getty, Getty, Avalon, Dave Formula, Justin Thomas

"MAGAZINE WERE SO IMPORTANT – THE BIG ONE THAT GOT AWAY, IF YOU LIKE."
SIMON DRAPER, A&R

Sweetheart contractors: Magazine circa *The Correct Use Of Soap* (from left) Adamson, Formula, Devoto, John Doyle, McGeoch.

love with the woman," says Adamson. "What are you supposed to do? I get the call from Howard and I thought, The slaughterhouse is mine, and quite right. I was ready for it. But we carried on."

In Adamson's remarkable 2021 memoir Up Above The City, Down Beneath The Stars, he writes that Devoto made like he would overlook the transgression, "then produces from his inside jacket pocket a Polaroid photo. It's of me in full make-up and a rather fetching woman's corset…'"

Devoto's own liaisons were alluded to in Michael Winterbottom's Manc music biopic 24 Hour Party People, where his dalliance with Tony Wilson's wife Lindsey Reade was reprised by actors in a toilet cubicle. Devoto, cast as a cleaner, broke the fourth wall to declare, "I definitely don't remember this happening." Wilson would attempt to exclude his nemesis from 1986's punk celebration The Festival Of The Tenth Summer. In the event, Devoto borrowed The Smiths' backline and played under the name Adultery.

FEELING THE PRESSURE AT HOME, MAGAZINE STILL had America. "Driving over the bridge into Manhattan – corny or not – that was quite something," Devoto recalls. "Maybe – just maybe – this is where everything changes? I had a mix of [Sly Stone cover] Thank You Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin, the most recent thing we'd recorded, and slid it into the limo's cassette player. The Manhattan skyline. That was a special moment."

Reality would set in soon afterwards, as six members of Magazine squeezed onto two bench seats in a modest sedan, for a two-month trawl of the clubs. Still, America liked them. As Formula recalls, Andy Warhol came to see them play at Hurrah in New York. "We just came off the stage, walked in the dressing room and he's sat there in the corner," he says. "We tried to talk to him but I don't think him and Howard shared one word."

Surprisingly for a group who could seem foreboding, all members remember life on the road as full of camaraderie and adventure. Adamson recalls partying with members of raunchy TV dance troupe Hot Gossip, whose Sarah Brightman was the partner of Magazine manager Andrew Graham-Stewart. Doyle, who says he only realised much later how much younger he was than Formula, fondly remembers such internal code words as 'gasf' (used to warn of booze-scrounging dressing room interlopers, and roughly translating as 'would you jump in my grave so fast?') and 'foyt' (a threat to poke someone in the eyes). Yet there was no mistaking who ultimately called the shots.

"As for my role in the band, perhaps 'benign dictator' puts it as well as anything," is Devoto's verdict. "At the time I thought of myself as a diplomat, head arbitrator, trying to forge out of what me and these brilliant guys were coming up with, the best that I thought it could be."

At the same time, heavy was the head that wore the laurel wreath. "It was exhausting," says Devoto. "Especially when I also took over managing the band's finances."

Indeed, the increasing tension between art and bill-paying was beginning to tell. 1980's *The Correct Use Of Soap* was a lighter, rhythmic, pop-cognisant affair with more McGeoch, given an uncharacteristically warm production by Martin Hannett. Released in May and hovering at 28 for a fortnight, it contained key recording A Song From Under The Floorboards – lyrically based on Dostoevsky's 1864 novella Notes From Underground (its assertion, "an intelligent man cannot become anything seriously, and it is only the fool who becomes anything", was a sentiment sure to resonate with Devoto).

Yet over the crucial period of its release, the band would confuse record buyers by putting out four singles in five months. Only July's Sweetheart Contract charted, at 54. "That was their solution," says Draper. "To release four singles, one a month. Which is a crazy stupid idea. But, you know, we let them do it."

Worse was to come. McGeoch had been moonlighting with Siouxsie & The Banshees since March, and in July, he defected to the more successful group full-time. As Banshees bass player Steve Severin told Radio 2: "The Banshees were the mistress and eventually we got him to leave his wife."

"Howard did say if *The Correct Use Of Soap* doesn't cross over, I don't know what will," says Formula. "I would say that the real unease for John started with that album. He was starting to think that Howard, who'd basically put his foot down and said 'I'm not doing any interviews or promo', was going about it the wrong way. I think they had some serious conversations on that front. I think we all kind of knew that once John left, that was the end of it all."

YET MAGAZINE DID NOT STOP. INSTEAD, THEY recruited Ultravox's Robin Simon for five months to play in the US, New Zealand and Australia, where the live album *Play* was recorded. After Simon also left, Devoto's friend Ben Mandelson came in for 1981's patchy farewell *Magic, Murder And The Weather*. While all admit something unique was lost when McGeoch jumped ship, Doyle is gently sceptical of talk of the guitarist as an incomparable genius.

"At the time, was it really thought of that way?" he wonders. "He was an extremely able and talented player who could play in any style. He was the guitarist in Magazine. Full stop. We didn't think in terms of reverence or anything." ➢

In the dreamhouse: Siouxsie Sioux and John McGeoch.

And there was irony in store. In 1979, McGeoch, Formula and Adamson had been engaged by Blitz club DJ Rusty Egan to play alongside members of Ultravox in New Romantic group Visage. In March 1981, Visage's Fade To Grey was Number 8 in the UK, and a hit across Europe.

"Bloody Visage was a bit of a joke," says Formula. "A bit of fun, with a drawn-out gestation. There was all this love and dedication to Magazine, and then it happens that three of the band are in something that's getting Number 1s all over Europe. It felt wrong. Howard must've been pissed off."

True to form, Devoto waited until the eve of *Magic, Murder And The Weather*'s June release to announce he was leaving. The final words sung on closing track The Garden were "I am responsible".

"I think that they had the opportunity, and they made their own decisions, and it didn't work," concludes Draper, who says that Virgin never lost money on the group. "I've got no criticism of them. The whole company were behind Magazine. They were so important – the big one that got away, if you like."

"It's the little things that really count," ventures Howard. "At Top Of The Pops I wouldn't have asked the girl in the make-up department to make me look more pale. She just slapped on a load of pancake make-up and lost my lovely cheekbones. If she hadn't done that, my sullen performance would've thoroughly charmed all those naysayers."

Could he have done it differently?

"Around the time of the second album [NME writer] Nick Kent suggested I was a total fatalist," he reflects. "As far as my attitude to the big things in life, there's a lot of truth to that. Looking back on my life both in and out of music I think I can account for most of my behaviour but that doesn't mean I don't sometimes think, 'Man, I really was someone else back then.'"

IN 1983, DEVOTO'S SOLE SOLO ALBUM *JERKY VERSIONS Of The Dream* – promoted wearing the same leather jacket he wore in Magazine – spent a week at Number 57 in the UK albums chart. Other members would have better fortune, with Adamson joining Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds in 1983 and Martin Jackson enjoying huge success in the mid-'80s as a third of jazzy popsters Swing Out Sister. After leaving the Banshees in 1982, McGeoch formed The Armoury Show with Skids frontman Richard Jobson and Doyle (the latter says they never discussed their time in Magazine during this period). From 1986 to 1992, the guitarist played in PiL. Suffering increasingly from epilepsy, he died in his sleep on March 4, 2004, aged 48. "He had all these wonderful attributes," Jobson told MOJO, "but he also had this kind of avaricious love of booze and drugs."

After two albums with multi-instrumentalist Norman Fisher-Jones (aka Noko) as Luxuria, Devoto left music and managed a London photo library, later reuniting with Pete Shelley for 2002's Buzzkunst project. In 2009 the re-formed Magazine were joined by Noko for gigs and, minus Adamson, 2011's epoch-uniting album *No Thyself*. Since then, Devoto's gone to ground again, and answers MOJO's questions by e-mail, though his speaking voice's deliberate, amused emphases and pauses, and wariness of revelation, shine through. As for whether Magazine could ever rise again, Formula says not, while Adamson suggests they'd better get a move on. "It seems unlikely. But never say never," says Devoto, who turned 70 on March 15. "Hopeless, aren't I?"

"It's strange," says Adamson. "People don't feel secure being *between* things, between worlds, which is where Magazine lay. There was an aura that Howard had – this thing that made you feel separate and ahead of the game, where another world seemed to open. So it's like, now people don't even think about it. I think that suits the narrative, really. It's forgotten. But it's still very much alive."

Barry Adamson's Up Above The City, Down Beneath The Stars is published by Omnibus. Dave Formula's studio The Sweet Factory is open for your recording needs: sweetfactorystudios.co.uk.

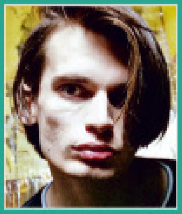
MODEL WORKER

FROM A NEW BOOK, FIVE EMINENT ADMIRERS SALUTE LATE MAGAZINE/BANSHEES/PiL GUITARIST JOHN McGEOCH.

SIOUXSIE SIOUX
Grande Dame of post-punk

"I remember [the Banshees] being really, really desperate to find a guitarist. It was so soul-destroying not finding anyone that had a spark. Of course, Shot By Both Sides – that song and really the sound of the guitar – was just something which said, We have to see if this guy is available. It was stunning work that we did together [McGeoch played on *Kaleidoscope* (1980), *Juju* (1981), *A Kiss In The Dreamhouse* (1982)] and I just think it's such a shame that it couldn't have gone on a bit longer… Out of all the musicians I've worked with in the Banshees, I could see myself working with McGeoch again."

JONNY GREENWOOD
Radiohead's big screen guitarist/keyboardist



"I heard *The Correct Use Of Soap* when I was about 10 or 11 and I played it constantly. Sweetheart Contract was my favourite. I love that McGeoch played everything in the service of the song – not to grandstand. On this song, his feel, and the sound of his guitar, is just so fluid and musical. [Magazine] were ambitious writers – lyrically as well as musically – and occupied an odd space between punk and keyboard-driven music. The songs were well written and arranged thoughtfully – never ponderous or pretentious. It was a lesson in not being boring."

JOHNNY MARR
Indie rock chaser of comets

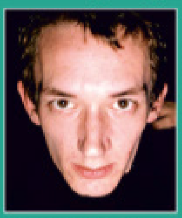
"Like everyone else who noticed John McGeoch, it was because of Shot By Both Sides and then The Light Pours Out Of Me. The word "arch" comes to mind – he uses a lot of half tone runs, and there's a considered conceptual mind at play there. You really hear it in *The Correct Use Of Soap* and riffs like Because You're Frightened. It shows someone who was doing something very deliberate and it is also someone who was very of the times."

RODDY FRAME
Aztec Camera man

"I first saw John playing with Magazine in 1978 in the Satellite City club in Glasgow. I was already a huge fan. He played all the phased arpeggios and tricky chords with a stylish swagger… His guitar parts were like a signpost to beyond punk for any guitarists wishing to progress. Never naff or self-indulgent. Never improvised. A style that wasn't rooted in the blues. It was edgy and audacious and playful… Even his choice of guitar, a Yamaha SG, seemed to signify that he wasn't interested in rock'n'roll orthodoxy. Bill Nelson – another Northern innovator – was the only other person I'd seen play that model."

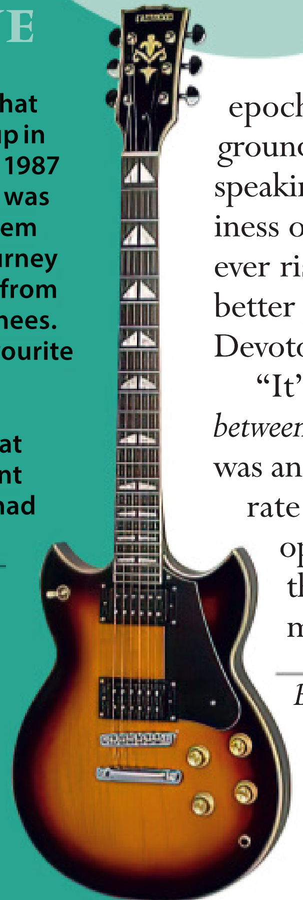
"JOHN'S GUITAR PARTS WERE A SIGNPOST TO BEYOND PUNK."
RODDY FRAME

KEITH LEVENE
Ex-PiL progressive punk



"It really fits that John ended up in PiL [between 1987 and 1992]; he was perfect for them [after the] journey he'd been on from Magazine and then the Banshees. Magazine were one of my favourite bands – when Devoto left Buzzcocks I found that really interesting. Devoto was in that weirdy-punk mystical/militant area. He was intelligent and had skin in the game."

Interviews excerpted from The Light Pours Out Of Me – The Authorised Biography Of John McGeoch by Rory Sullivan-Burke, published by Omnibus on April 28. The Yamaha SG 1000 is now being replicated by Eastwood Guitars in tribute to McGeoch and is available in sunburst, green and black finishes.



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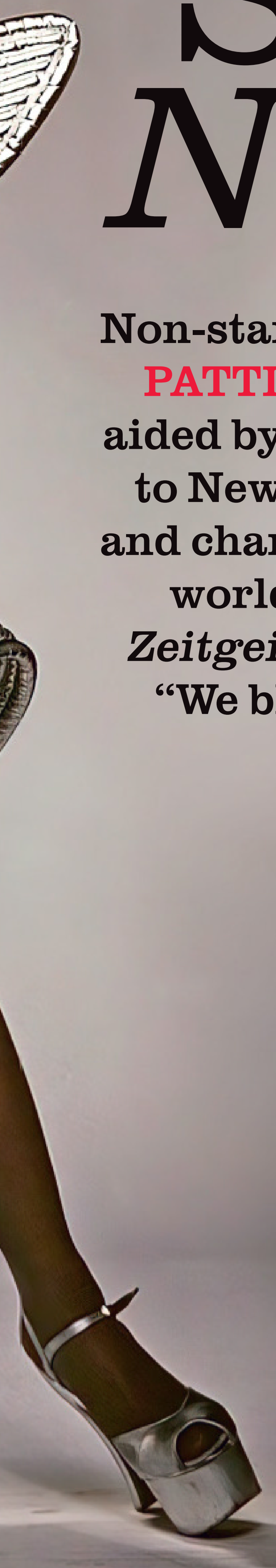
Silver dream hit-machine: Labelle (clockwise from top left) Nona Hendryx, Sarah Dash and Patti LaBelle, 1975.

MOJO EYEWITNESS

LABELLE SOAR WITH *NIGHTBIRDS*

Non-standard girl group survivors and prodigious harmonisers, PATTI LaBELLE, NONA HENDRYX and SARAH DASH were aided by The Who's managers and Stevie Wonder before heading to New Orleans, re-inventing themselves as silver funk sirens and charting big with their "Womanifesto" 1974 LP and its spicy worldwide smash single Lady Marmalade. "We filtered the *Zeitgeist*," say the group, manager Vicki Wickham and others. "We blazed a trail. But it wasn't how people wrote about us."

Interviews by LOIS WILSON • Portrait by JOHN BRYSON



John Bryson/Shutterstock

Nona Hendryx: We started out as Patti LaBelle & The Bluebelles: Patti Labelle, Sarah Dash, Cindy Birdsong and myself. We had hits with Down The Aisle (The Wedding Song) [1963], You'll Never Walk Alone ['64] and Over The Rainbow ['66], and then Cindy left to join The Supremes.

Vicki Wickham: I met the girls in 1966 when they appeared on [ITV music show] Ready Steady Go! which I was producing. When Cindy left in '67 I was running Track Records in New York for [Who managers] Kit Lambert and Chris Stamp. Sarah called and asked if I could help. They played the Apollo, so I took Kit and he said, "Sign them if you want." My big thing was they were a girl group – they dressed alike, looked alike, did everything alike and that time had gone. We needed to start from scratch. I put them in jeans and T-shirts, like The Who and the Stones. It wasn't really them, but it was different.

NH: Initially it was a trial-and-error period; we were stretching, evolving, dressing this way, doing our hair that way and singing songs we loved by The Who and the Stones, and at the same time Vicki, Chris and Kit encouraged us ➢

'Belle stars: (clockwise from above) LaBelle, Dash and Hendryx in Amsterdam, 1975; Nona with Frank Zappa, Local club, NY, 1975; feathered up in London the same year.

"WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT 'VOULEZ-VOUS COUCHER AVEC MOI CE SOIR' MEANT."

Patti LaBelle

to write. There was no storyboard and we recorded [1971's] *Labelle* and [1972's] *Moon Shadow* for Warners and we began to create this new path.

Bob Gruen: I had taken photographs of Ike and Tina Turner, and Vicki said Patti LaBelle was like Tina Turner but different, and indeed she was. Labelle had a great attitude, they were open to all suggestions and tried everything. For the cover of *Labelle*, Vicki got them to hang upside down from these hanging rings at a boys' gym in New Jersey, and at the end of the shoot to jump into the swimming pool in their clothes. For *Moon Shadow*, they sat on this bench in Coney Island with all the old guys. Girl groups didn't do those kind of photo shoots.

Gregg Geller: After the two LPs for Warners and *Pressure Cookin'* [1973] for RCA, Vicki came to see me and said they needed a new label. I was A&R at Epic by then and was desperate to sign them. I took my boss to see them at the Village Gate on Bleecker Street. Stevie Wonder sat in, and it was obvious to everyone something was happening.

VW: Greg signed the group to Epic and said, "You're going to Sea-Saint Studio in New Orleans to work with The Meters and Allen Toussaint."

GG: We were sending a lot of acts to Allen Toussaint at the time. I had signed Minnie Riperton just before Labelle, and she was booked in to go next. Then Stevie Wonder got in touch at the last minute and said he wanted to produce Minnie. You don't say no to Stevie Wonder, so we had Allen Toussaint all ready to go but no one to send. At the time Kool & The Gang were making Funky Stuff and Hollywood Swinging and I wanted to put Labelle with a funky rhythm section, and a lightbulb went off. There was no one more funky than The Meters and Allen Toussaint.

Patti LaBelle: We were in New Orleans for two months and I have such fond memories. Allen was so laid-back, so simple, not flashy, just very cool and smooth. He never once said you've got to sing this way or that way. He let us be ourselves and him being so mellow got the best out of Labelle.

Leo Nocentelli: I'd done a lot of tracks with Allen, right back to the early '60s with Mother-In-Law and Ya Ya and Working In The Coal Mine, and a lot of the time it was me just playing what I felt to a track. With Labelle, they brought Budd Ellison, their keyboardist/musical director with them. He'd demo-ed the songs with Nona in New York and he conveyed to Allen what they were looking for and played us the songs. It was me, George Porter Jr., Herman Ernest and Art Neville and it was incredibly natural and organic. Nothing was written down and we put our take on it.

VW: A lot of times being in the studio and recording an album is agony. But this was relaxed, spontaneous. Every night this wonderful woman called Pots brought home-cooked food for us to eat in the studio and we all sat down together. It felt like a family.

PL: The first song we recorded was Lady Marmalade. We were on the way to the airport and [songwriter/producer] Bob Crewe called Vicki and said, "Please bring the girls to my house before you get to the airport." She did, and we listened to Lady Marmalade, which he played to us on the piano. We knew it was a hit. Even though we didn't know what 'Voulez-vous coucher avec moi ce soir' meant, it was a statement, and that melody, it kept bouncing in my mind.

LN: When we were tracking Lady Marmalade and Patti started to sing, it made my hair stand on end. I had never heard anyone sing like that.

GG: When you think of the confluence of events, sending these three girls down to New Orleans to make a record with *the* New Orleans producer and *the* New Orleans rhythm section, and they had a song about a hooker in New Orleans, it's just pure serendipity and worked like a charm. It was obvious it was going to be the single, but that was no reflection on Nona's writing. She was the creative force in the group.

NH: I wrote about what I experienced and I was writing all the time. I'd written Space Children, Nightbird, You Turn Me On, Somebody Somewhere and Are You Lonely? for the album, and took them to New Orleans.

VW: Nona was writing these songs from a woman's point of view, exploring gender and sexuality. A song like You Turn Me On was shocking to some but empowering to more.

NH: I was expressing a feeling. No one ever said, "You can't write this." No one said, "Why are you writing such a sexually explicit song?" It was always, "That's a great song, let's do it."

GG: When they got back from New Orleans with the tapes, we got [CBS staff engineer] Don Puluse to mix it and Vicki booked them a show at the

Getty (10)

"They had the rock'n'roll sensibility but they had soul": Labelle join Cher on her TV show, February 16, 1975.

Metropolitan Opera House [on October 6, 1974]. It was spectacular.

PL: It was billed as a 'Wear Something Silver' night. Everybody came in with something silver on. I remember [actress/choreographer] Debbie Allen was there, Cher was there, the Cycle Sluts [nightclub act hailed as 'the It Girls of gay culture'].

Susan Blond: The first Labelle show I worked was at the Met and it was history-making. The girls had the silver hair and the false eyelashes, they wore their Larry LeGaspi silver space-age creations, Nona in the chrome, Patti with the huge feathers, Sarah looking so sexy. They flew down onto the stage on wires and they were beyond categorisation. They had the rock'n'roll sensibility but they had soul. It was a party, a celebration, and we got given these beautiful silver birds which said 'Labelle' on them on a chain.

VW: Larry LeGaspi ran a boutique called Moonstone in the East Village. He was a designer and he came to an early Labelle show and said, "Let me dress them." I told him, "I can't pay you." He said, "I just want to do it." He made them new costumes which were fantastic, and with each record and each concert his creations got more flamboyant.

PL: Larry's costumes were part of who Labelle were. They got people to take notice of us and then they saw us, these black women, and then they listened to what we were singing, to our message. When we made the move to do something different, when we became these outrageous looking black ladies in silver space outfits, and we became the first black group to play the Metropolitan Opera House, and the first black group to appear on the cover of Rolling Stone magazine… it wasn't like we set out to do these amazing feats, and sometimes I have to pinch myself. But I must say, we were pretty cool.

SB: Lady Marmalade got to Number 1 and *Nightbirds* Number 7 [both March 1975]. The product department had T-shirts made up saying 'Voulez-vous coucher avec moi ce soir'. They did Soul Train and Rock Concert on TV, and the [July issue] Rolling Stone cover was a miracle. Getting anyone who was black on Rolling Stone was impossible, it didn't matter how well you knew the editors, and we knew them really well, they would just say, "it's not our audience." But everyone loved Labelle.

LN: The *Nightbirds* session sits way up there. I have a platinum record of Lady Marmalade on my wall and I am really proud of it. When people come round I always show them it. I say, "I played on that", and they are always impressed.

NH: *Nightbirds* was our womanifesto. We filtered the *Zeitgeist* through us, who we were, where we had come from, where we were going. We blazed a trail. But it wasn't how people wrote about us. They didn't acknowledge us in the way they did James Brown or Jimi Hendrix or George Clinton. In hindsight we achieved a lot, but at the time we were locked into that cycle of writing, creating, touring, recording, writing… We went back to New Orleans to record *Phoenix* [1975] and then worked with David Rubinson for *Chameleon* [1976]. We never stopped.

GG: When a group has a hit, a label has to take advantage of it. You put them to work and it is hard, the joy can come out of it and it can eventually become debilitating.

VW: Pat was becoming more and more unhappy with the direction Labelle were going in, Nona experimenting, going into almost punk rock territory. The split wasn't unexpected.

PL: I wanted to sing more ballads but I was petrified, I thought I can't do it without Nona and Sarah and I was really afraid. But I took the chance [the group disbanded in December 1976].

NH: We stayed in touch. When Patti started telling the press that Labelle were going to make a new record, in the end Sarah and I just said, "Are we getting back together? Because if we're not then you've got to stop telling everyone we are."

PL: We did the reunion, did [2008's] *Back To Now* and the moment we got in the room together it was like we never split, it was the same feeling, we were the same ladies. We had divorced but then got married all over again. It felt wonderful.

NH: It's hard to imagine Labelle now that Sarah [who died in 2021] has gone. I'm still dealing with her death. Labelle were the three of us together.

PL: Nona and I sang Nightbird at her memorial. It wasn't easy, but love never dies. In the music, the spirit lives. It's like she's not gone, she's still here with us.

Many thanks to Vicki Wickham

Leo Nocentelli's Another Side is out now on Light In The Attic.

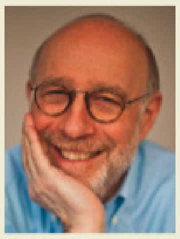
DRAMATIS PERSONAE

● **Patti LaBelle** (lead voice)

● **Nona Hendryx** (voice, songwriter)

● **Vicki Wickham** (manager)

● **Leo Nocentelli** (lead guitarist)



● **Gregg Geller** (Epic A&R)

● **Susan Blond** (Epic press officer)

● **Bob Gruen** (photographer)

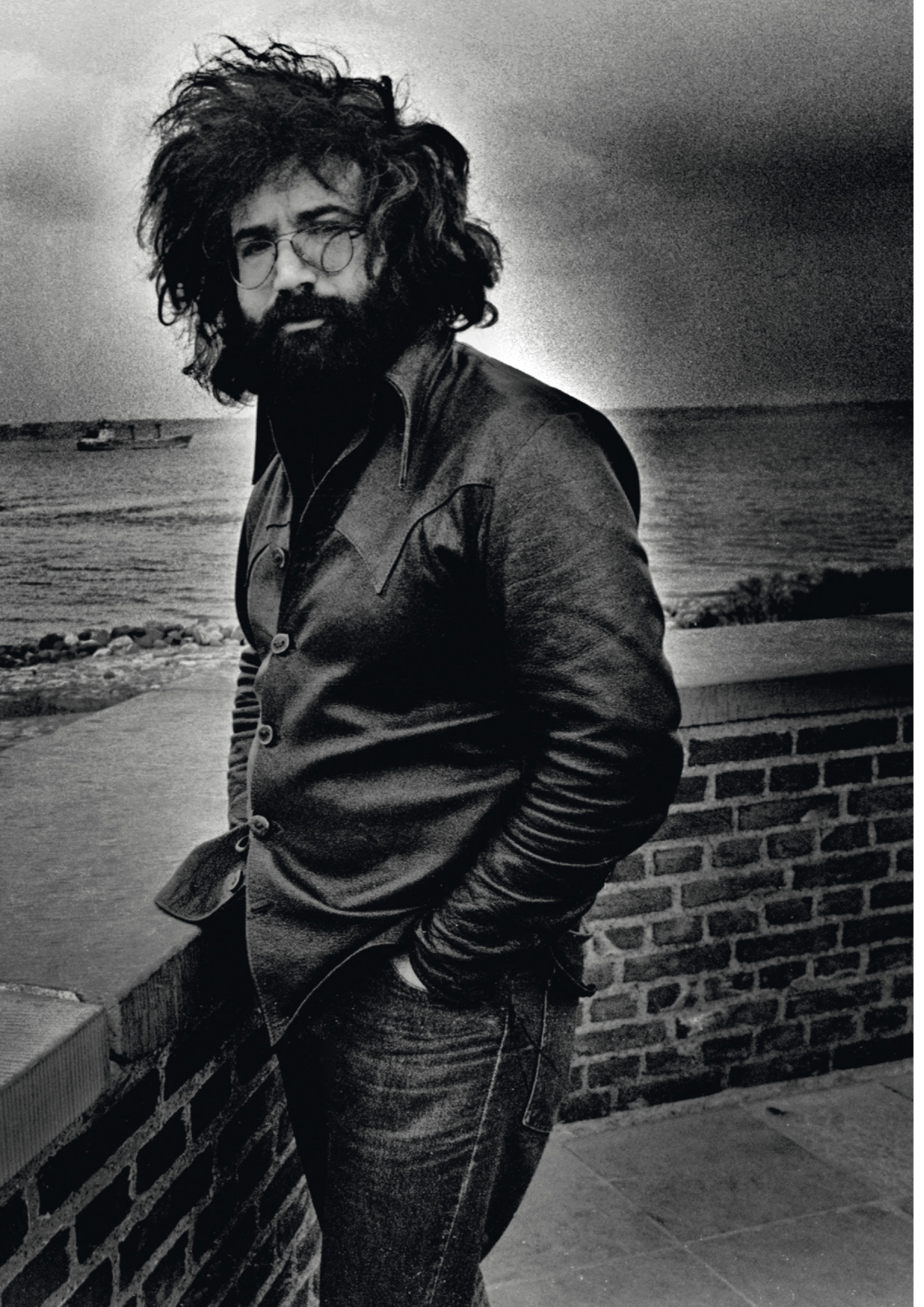
Pull the other one: (main image) Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia, Copenhagen, April 1972; (inset) the Dead park and ride on the Europe '72 tour.

A HIGHER POWER

In 1972, the **GRATEFUL DEAD** embarked on their first bona fide European tour, a cavalcade of clown masks, switchblades and lashings of LSD. Fifty years on, as official releases loom for its legendary soundboard treasures, the survivors celebrate some of the most extraordinary music they ever made, and the last hurrah of the talismanic Pigpen. "It was pure Grateful Dead back then," they tell **GRAYSON HAVER CURRIN**. "Magical and innocent and beautiful."

Photographs: **MARY ANNE MAYER**, **GIJSBERT HANEKROOT**

Gijsbert Hanekroot/Getty, Mary Anne Mayer



THE POWER NEVER went out on the Grateful Dead the first time they toured Europe, in the Spring of 1972.

Just months before their transatlantic arrival, Dan Healy – the Dead's steadfast audio technician and electrical handyman during their hazy San Francisco incubation – rejoined the crew after catching a Manhattan concert at the end of 1971 and being dismayed by its haphazard production. "It was dismal," Healy tells MOJO. "The sound system was hopelessly inadequate. It wasn't going in the right direction: light, bright, good."

That night in New York, co-founder Jerry Garcia and drummer Bill Kreutzmann asked Healy for help. They were soon headed to Europe for a two-month tour of historic theatres that held thousands, and they needed their mountain of gear to work for these prospective fans. Healy began polling bands that had already toured Europe about the challenges – "Stage power," members of The Rolling Stones' entourage repeated.

"You could lose power on-stage by the fucking house lights going up," explains Sam Cutler, who left his post as the Stones' tour manager to handle the Dead soon after December '69's Altamont tragedy. "You've really got to know what you're doing."

Healy decided to eliminate the risk entirely, especially since so much of the Dead's appeal depended on longform improvisation and at-will segues; losing power would devastate such flow. He invented a system that used massive wires to tap into a city's electrical grid *before* it arrived in a century-old building like London's Lyceum or Paris's Olympia. The electricity then fanned out into a network of circuits the crew could control, independent of venues with outdated infrastructure. "If the whole theatre went down," Healy says, "we would still be on."

Photofest, Getty, Mary Anne Mayer

No other band had done something so daunting to ensure their performance remained uninterrupted, though the practice soon became *de rigueur*. Such willpower defined the Grateful Dead's 22-show marathon through Europe, where a caravan of 53 California freaks thriving on a mix of acid, hash and booze not only found a new musical apotheosis but also reinvented perceptions of what a tour could be, how it could operate, and just what it could produce.

"We found ourselves on the cutting edge, not because our goal was to be on the cutting edge but because our goal was to see how good we could get it," Healy says. "We had the willingness to seek out and develop."

The Dead's European debut proper represented a fortuitous confluence of preparation, circumstance, and what some on hand called magic. They had more than a half-dozen new songs to test on-stage with an inchoate line-up that included two keyboardists, only one drummer (after years with two), and a Southern soul singer. Two years after the release of *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*, they synthesized their roots impulses with the electrified wonder of their past and future. Inspired by scenery of ancient castles and verdant landscapes, they were simultaneously comforted and entertained by two busloads of family, friends, and employees they'd brought along for what guitarist Bobby Weir called a "working vacation". They even had the foresight to record it all with emerging technology.

“PEOPLE USED TO STARE AT THE BUSES – ‘OH LOOK, THERE’S A BUS FULL OF CLOWNS! HOW STRANGE IS THAT?’” SAM CUTLER

FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE GRATEFUL DEAD HAD gone gold.

In late September 1971, they issued their concise and charged second live album, which they intended to call *Skull Fuck* until Warner Brothers talked them into self-titling the 11-track set of recordings from (mostly) New York stages. Though infamously averse to promotional plans, the band agreed to market the record by doing what they did best – playing live and broadcasting more than a dozen shows on local radio. In less than six weeks, it sold 500,000 copies, no small feat for a band that had clashed with its label like an angry stepchild. Warner Brothers had started to accept that the Dead, uneven at best in a studio, thrived on a stage.

“Dear old Warner Brothers – they stuck with it, this fucking mad bunch of lunatic people from Northern California,” says Cutler, sitting shirtless in his home in Brisbane, Australia, his tattooed chest framed by posters of the Stones and the Dead. “They slowly got to understand who the Grateful Dead were.”

Warner Brothers’ acceptance of the Dead’s live appeal dovetailed with a wider realisation: if the band hoped to grow its audience, it would need to visit new ones, particularly outside of the US. They had played the Hollywood Music Festival near Newcastle-Under-Lyme in May 1970, their performance beset by rain and electronic hiccups. Rain scuttled their last-minute appearance at a French festival in July 1971, too, though they played a glorious impromptu gig at the fabled Chateau d’Hérouville. “Europe was a train that was coming, and we all knew it,” Weir remembers. “There was no holding it off.”

Foot down: (top left) the Dead in 1968 (clockwise from front) Mickey Hart, Phil Lesh, Garcia, Bill Kreutzmann, Ron ‘Pigpen’ McKernan, Bob Weir; (top middle) a mountain view for the Dead, Europe 1972; (top right) Rolling Stones tour manager Sam Cutler at Altamont, December ’69, after which he joined the Dead; clowning around; Garcia twinkles.

The Dead, however, had rarely done much for strictly commercial reasons. Their litmus test was a single question: will it be fun? Almost as soon as they began discussing European plans, someone proposed taking everyone in their immediate scene, from wives and some children to bookkeepers and pals.

The responsibility for translating whim into reality landed largely on Cutler. A self-described “psychedelic fascist,” the plain-spoken Brit had urged Garcia, his housemate, to add structure to the Dead’s business, to make it a boon and not a burden. “The challenge of the Grateful Dead,” says Cutler, “was how to tour, work hard, make enough money that they could survive, and still have an environment in which they could make their peculiar music and feel happy.”

The band hoped to take 100 people to Europe, all expenses paid. Cutler secured funding for international freight and equipment trucks from Warner Brothers, then did the math on how big an entourage they could afford. They settled on 40, a figure that ballooned to 53.

“They wanted to have fun,” Cutler said, “but they didn’t want it to be so structured they thought they were in some fucking army.”

THE DEAD LANDED AT HEATHROW ON APRIL Fool’s Day 1972, saddled with so much equipment that some of the estimated 22 tons had to be sent on a second flight. There was an 80-page index of gear, all sorted meticulously into boxes so as to expedite customs inspections at borders. ➢

Indeed, less than six months after the tour ended, the Dead released a two-hour distillation of what they accomplished overseas, simply dubbed *Europe ’72*, that went double-platinum. Four decades later, the band released all 22 shows, bundling them together in an ostentatious edition housed inside a suitcase.

A half-century after that career-defining trip, the Grateful Dead are now revisiting 1972 for a spree of commemorative releases, including a remastered version of *Europe ’72*, a vinyl edition of the show at Wembley Empire Pool, and a set collecting the Dead’s commanding four-night finale at the Lyceum. They remain testaments to the Dead’s unprecedented moment of challenge and opportunity, vision and ambition.

“We had this notion that it may not *seem* doable, but we’re going to get it done because it has to be done. And if it has to be done, we’re going to do it,” says Weir, chuckling at his tautology. “That’s where we lived.”

≺ Everyone toted a 30-page itinerary – clad in blue paper and emblazoned with the band's "skull & roses" emblem – that contained information about American embassies, foreign currencies, and "European electricity".

Some members of the extended family had purchased new clothes (and even custom-made Nudie suits), with Kreutzmann buying several suits on San Francisco's famous Polk Street. "We were hippies coming from Haight-Ashbury to Europe," says the drummer today. "You wanted to bring a tie and a nice shirt."

If it ever really existed, such decorum didn't last long. Divided into two buses, each faction of the touring party took on distinct qualities. There was the boisterous 'Bozo' partiers and the more sedate 'Bolo' bus for, as Dead lyricist Robert Hunter once put it, "people who preferred to sink into their neuroses, or just sleep." The Bozos pranked the Bolos and vice versa; denizens of both recalled near-constant laughter. Insider jokes – fictitious folk heroes, origin stories, a prankster philosophy called "hypnocracy" that was built upon a series of logical fallacies – emerged. As it moved across the Old World, the tour generated its own mythological gravity.

In Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, the trek's third show, someone acquired a number of clown masks. As the coterie passed through subsequent towns, they donned their costumes, pressing their terrifying clown faces against bus windows. The masks even made a brief appearance on Danish public television, Garcia howling as he pulled a wild orange wig over his own brown mop.

"People used to stare at the buses – 'Hey, there's a busload of freaks,'" says Cutler with a grin. "In 1972, it was still a pretty rare thing to see in Europe. Then they'd put the clown masks on. 'Oh look, there's a bus full of clowns! How strange is *that*?'"

As the Dead moved across Europe, the gang absorbed its history. During a visit to Thingstätte, a large amphitheatre carved into a hill at the start of the Third Reich, Weir pondered playing there to subvert its Nazi past: "I'd still love to play that place," he says.

Steve Parish, the roadie (or, in Dead parlance, "quippy") who long wrangled Garcia's gear, echoed a similar thought after he visited Notre Dame with bassist Phil Lesh, both tripping. "As the sound of his voice echoes off the walls and carries spectacularly, effortlessly," Parish later wrote, "I can't help but think that the Dead could put on a great show here." There were excursions to the Eiffel Tower and Stonehenge, to lavish multi-course dinners with fancy wines, to a Formula One race in Monaco.

The excitement fed the shows. Much like a Dead set itself, the concerts began with a touch of hesitation in London, as if the band were feeling out an entire continent; by the time they returned to London to wrap the tour, they were limber and versatile and adventurous, pushing toward the four-hour mark on the final night, where the rest of the band had dosed an unwilling Weir.

The Dead had gone to Europe, as Cutler put it, as "cultural ambassadors for the counterculture". But the trip changed them, too, reminding them just how young the United States was and how much there was to learn. "There were still bullet holes in a lot of the buildings," Weir recalls of Germany. "That sticks with you: these people aren't all that different from us, so how the hell did it come to this?"

The entire expedition seemed to elicit only one consistent complaint, and it was from Garcia: given all the days built into the itinerary for travel and leisure, they weren't playing enough music. "I'm a music junkie," he vented to Rolling Stone toward tour's end, "and I have to play every day."

Remembering the criticism, Cutler offers a wry laugh. "For Jerry, it would have been better to double the gigs. That just wasn't logically possible. He didn't give a fuck about looking at Paris or London, not really. He wanted to play."

FOR ALL THE EXTENDED FAMILY IN EUROPE, ONE especially notable brother was missing: Mickey Hart.

Early in 1971, the percussionist had taken leave from the band for reasons that, 50 years later, remain muddled. After his father Lenny, the group's business manager, absconded with as much as $350,000 of the Dead's cash, Hart was anguished by the betrayal. According to Dennis McNally's insider account, A Long Strange Trip, he self-medicated until he neared a nervous breakdown. "It was very painful," agrees Kreutzmann. "He was sick and couldn't keep carrying on."

Weir and Cutler, however, insist that the separation was entirely musical. In the early '70s, the Dead simply had no space for Hart's burgeoning interest in Indian classical music and percussive gewgaws. "It left very little room for the rest of us to play," insists Weir.

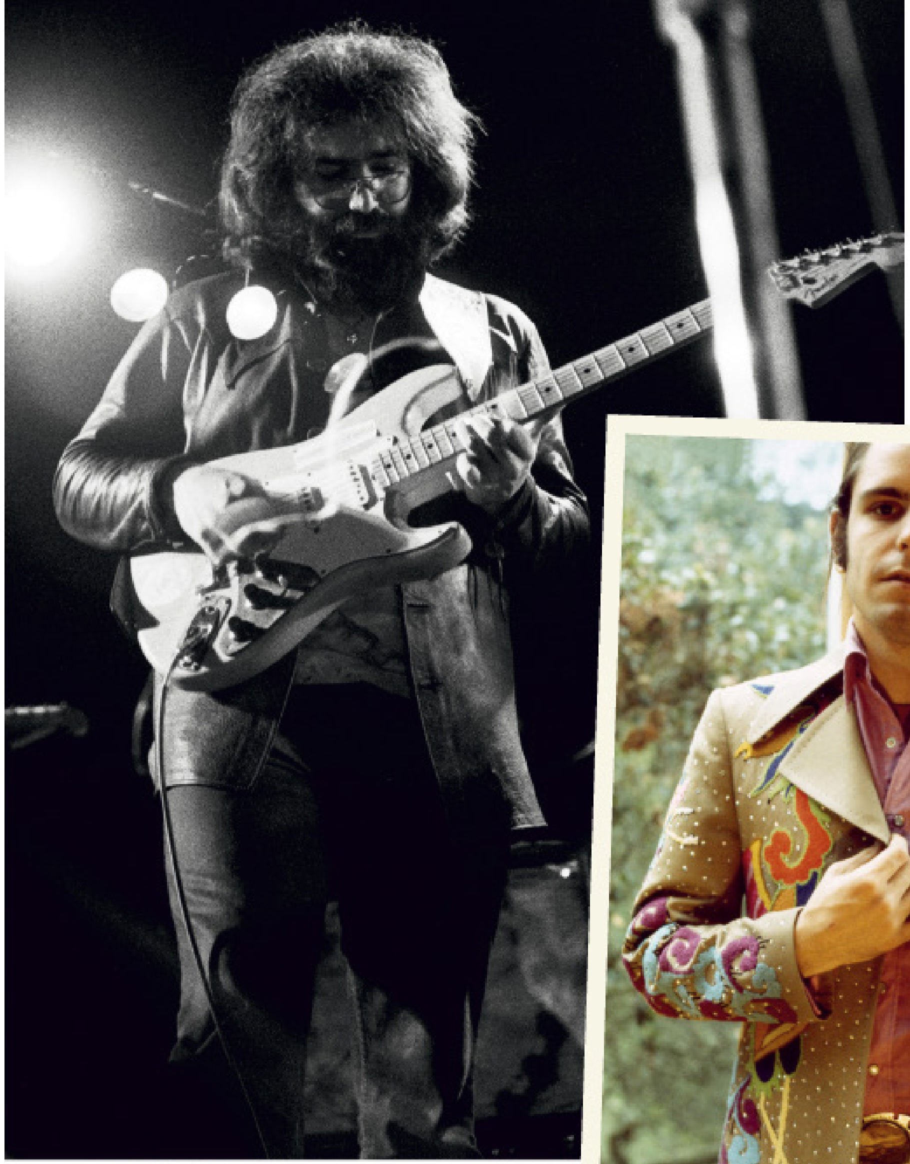
While Hart prepared his solo debut, *Rolling Thunder*, on his California ranch, the Dead continued to exploit the space his departure had opened. The near-nightly 'drums' improvisations were circumscribed, but Kreutzmann pushed himself in other ways, digging deeper into grooves while also decorating them, providing a sort of surrogate for Hart. He became more open, and the European crowds responded enthusiastically, reminding him of the continent's respect for jazz masters. "You can express yourself real clean when you're playing on your own," he says.

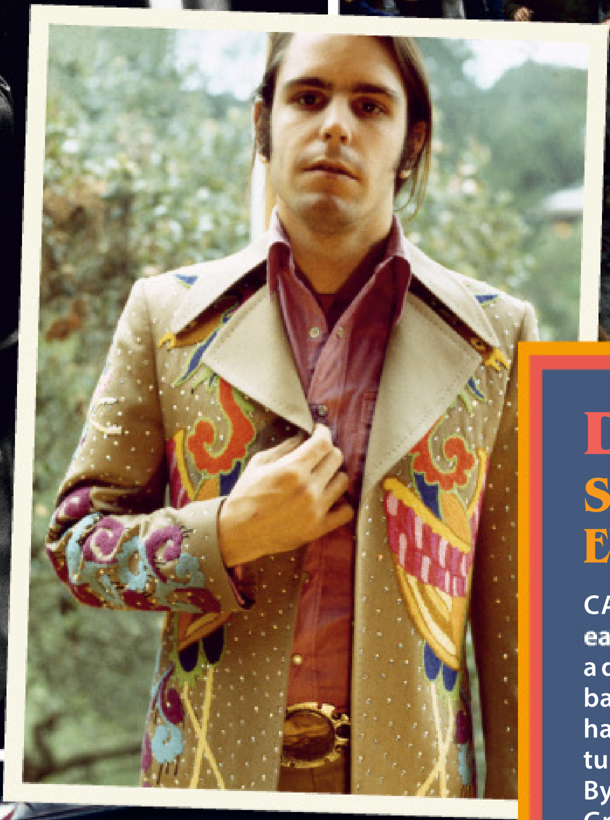
Though Kreutzmann found new space to explore, the keyboard section was suddenly quite full. On doctor's orders, co-founder Ron 'Pigpen' McKernan had missed chunks of the band's 1971 tours as he struggled with the effects of hard drinking, especially hepatitis. Once famously burly, he had grown gaunt.

One night in a tiny Bay Area club, a commanding Southern brunette, Donna Jean Godchaux, grabbed Garcia's arm and informed him that her taciturn husband, Keith, was the Dead's new pianist. The moment Garcia played with the classically trained jazz

"WE HAD THIS NOTION THAT IT MAY NOT *SEEM* DOABLE, BUT WE'RE GOING TO GET IT DONE. THAT'S WHERE WE LIVED." BOB WEIR

Mary Ann Mayer (5), Courtesy of David Lemieux





"A bus full of clowns": (clockwise from above) the Deadmobile trucks on through Europe, 1972; (from left) Keith Godchaux, Garcia (hidden), Donna Jean Godchaux, Lesh, Pigpen, Kreutzmann, Weir; on-set at the legendary Beat Club TV show in Bremen, April 21, '72; Garcia on-stage at the Jarhunderthalle, Frankfurt, April 26, '72; the view from the stage at Bickershaw Festival, Wigan, 1972; Weir resplendent in his custom-made Nudie suit.

fan, he agreed, calling Kreutzmann over to jam. "We couldn't fool the kid. We couldn't play anything he couldn't play – no tempo, no division," Kreutzmann gushes. "We went, 'OK, let's stop this and play some tunes.' They were incredible."

Keith Godchaux joined the Dead that October, his melodic delicacy and improvisational dynamism a far cry from Pigpen's earthy blues licks. And then, on New Year's Eve 1971, Donna – an Alabama native who had lent her brassy harmonies to Elvis, Cher, and Percy Sledge at sessions in Muscle Shoals – hopped on-stage to sing. The Dead had long struggled with the tension between the blues-rock band with a psychedelic streak that they were and the group exploring outer limits they hoped to become. Weir had worked to get there, but Pigpen had little interest.

"I accepted improvisation as a challenge, and I learned to love it," says Weir, who recruited the Godchauxes and every member of the Dead except McKernan to help record his delightfully plain-spoken solo debut, *Ace*, before departing for Europe. At the time, Pigpen was slowly working on his own project, which Weir still hopes to release. "But that wasn't the Pig's strong suit," Weir continues. "He was a simple guy and played simple music."

For Europe, however, Pigpen rallied, recognising the tour as a victory lap for the band he had helped lead. His off-stage adventures were limited, though he often jammed on blues tunes with Healy and a loose confederation of quippies. (Pigpen would jot down the lyrics for Healy in "tiny, perfect handwriting"; the sheets remain among his prized mementos.)

Pigpen's output as a singer was likewise limited on-stage, his customary slate of soulful rave-ups like Good Lovin' and Turn On Your Lovelight trimmed to perhaps one per show. The Dead performed Lovelight only once during the tour's first month. "I'm not sure if he played whole shows," Weir wonders. "He wasn't a ball of fire, so he would just feature when it was time to do a blues tune."

Although it lasted only two months, the double-keyboards configuration of Pigpen and Keith Godchaux proved to be one of ➢

DEAD RECKONING #1

SHOW: Newcastle City Hall, April 11, 1972
EYEWITNESS: Dave Henderson

"We just weren't ready for the Dead live, for the euphoric wash of sound."

CARLISLE IN the early 1970s wasn't a destination for bands. And, having been turned on to The Byrds and the Grateful Dead by a schoolmate's older cousin, Alan, that was a problem. We'd borrowed the albums and created our own narrative about the bus queue on *Workingman's Dead*, marvelling at the band's exotic names and facial hair. It was a world we wanted in on.

When the tour dates for Europe '72 were announced it only took us a couple of months to persuade our parents that a 120-mile round trip to Newcastle was essential. After all, we were both nearly 16, and Alan was a responsible adult who was rarely to be found in the city's head shop.

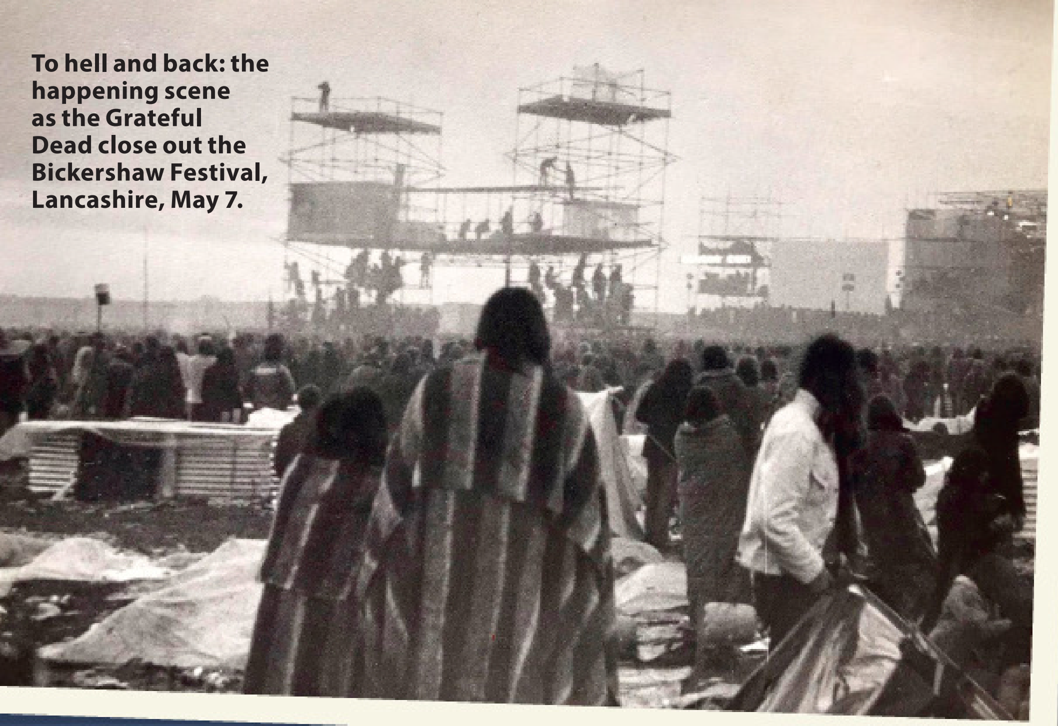
The faded grandeur of Newcastle City Hall wasn't an ideal place to see anything, but as it was our first gig who were we to know? Having fallen in love with *American Beauty*'s acoustic grandeur, we just weren't ready for the Dead live, for the interplay between Weir and Garcia, the euphoric wash of sound, the nod to the blues, the extended middle-eights. We were new to this.

Reprimanded for talking between songs – "We're taping this, man," said the guy in front – we were in awe of the band's dexterity, and when Casey Jones concluded the set we were astonished to hear that it was merely an intermission. Returning, they stretched out on an epic Truckin' – which stumbled into a drum solo – and what we learned later was The Other One, a 20-minute wig-out that was completely alien to teenagers nurtured on three-minute pop singles.

Of course, we only just caught the last train home, frantic parents in the pre-mobile era worried we had been abducted by Americans. In many ways, we had.

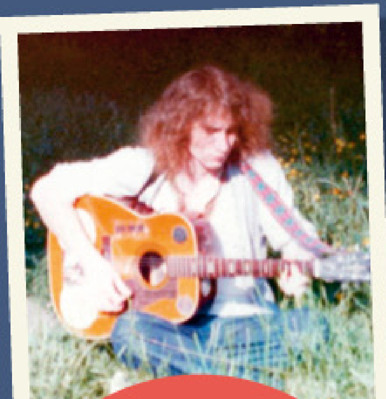
Dave Henderson compiles MOJO's cover-mount CDs and has worked at Glastonbury Festival for the last 25 years. He remains distraught that all bands don't play for four and a half hours.

To hell and back: the happening scene as the Grateful Dead close out the Bickershaw Festival, Lancashire, May 7.



DEAD RECKONING #2

SHOW: Bickershaw Festival, May 7, 1972
EYEWITNESS: Mark Cooper



"It's like Test cricket, intermittently boring, suddenly on fire."

I AM RIDING pillion on a friend's motorcycle, heading north on the A1 to Wigan, going down the road feeling, well, a little bad. I have no schooling in how to flow with the bike and I keep threatening to put my foot down on the tarmac as we turn another bend. Death has no mercy and seems but a roundabout away.

It is to be my second Grateful Dead show after my first communion with the band at Wembley's vast Empire Pool the previous month. I am 19 and my hair has grown since I cut it all off to please my parents before starting university some six months ago. We have no camping equipment, no rain gear, and no food but I know things will work out fine. After all, we have the stash…

Although I have pored over On The Road and The Electric Kool Aid Acid Test, I have yet to visit the US. However, I have taken to playing *American Beauty* at least once a day on my grey Dansette, in company or alone. I have stared at the ceiling to *Live Dead* and inhaled the street wisdom of Wharf Rat from 'Skull Fuck', the double live album that came out the week of my last haircut. None of this had quite prepared me for the glory of the Dead at Wembley. The vast speaker stacks, the size of the crowd, the smell of dope, the band's sudden shifting of moods, Garcia's endless lyrical soloing, Bob Weir's complex chords, Pigpen's menacing biker growl, Donna Godchaux's waist-length hair waving to the beat, the abundance of new Western shuffles like He's Gone or Jack Straw, the quality of the songs from both Garcia and Weir's new solo albums, the freeform trip to the stars and back in the second set. The Dead were laid-back yet electric. They certainly didn't behave like stars, and they exuded bonhomie. Garcia seemed like the wisest of elder brothers, twinkling behind his glasses, his beard, and his guitar. They seemed happy to transport us beyond tattered reason and bring us back with a shrug, a smile, and the joyous Sugar Magnolia.

Wembley was a glorious evening, but Bickershaw was a trip to hell and back. I couldn't walk at first after six hours on the back of the bike and then I couldn't walk because of the mud. It rained all weekend as we crouched beneath some helpful plastic sheeting and stared at the bonfires that started at night. I can't remember what I ate, if anything, and the site stank, but Captain Beefheart and Dr John both underlined my current certainty that all musical wisdom emanated from America. Finally, on Sunday evening, as the Dead took the stage, the sun came out through the clouds, and all was right with the world.

I make my way towards the front although the area beneath the stage is flooded. I stare up at the giant screens and put my life in the Dead's hands. In the second set they play both The Other One and Dark Star, one moment free of all moorings, the next locking into some heaven-sent groove. It's like Test cricket, intermittently boring, suddenly on fire. Then they lurch into Merle Haggard's mournful Sing Me Back Home. Garcia is the doomed prisoner, begging the warden to allow his guitar-playing friend to make his old memories come alive, and he's the guitarist, climbing into heart-rending solo after solo. I don't think I've ever been sadder. Or happier.

I have no idea how I got back south but I can promise you that in 1972, the Grateful Dead were The Greatest Band In The World.

Mark Cooper is the originating producer of Later… With Jools Holland, the BBC's Glastonbury coverage and many music docs.

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the most vital ever for the Grateful Dead. While Godchaux rose toward the heavens, Pigpen plunged into the swamp, the pair pushing and pulling the band simultaneously. But though the musical information they offered was conflicting, no one remembers any personal tension between the two.

"Pigpen's essence was so magnanimous," says Donna Jean today. "We never got to see him in his full regalia as an artist. He was so sick, but he held his own. He was uninhibited."

DESPITE THE ELECTRICAL BYPASSES, THE MASSIVE entourage, and the fresh members, the most audacious undertaking on the Dead's maiden European tour might be the one that now seems the most obvious – taping every show.

Early in 1969, the quippies hauled a hulking prototype of a 16-track audio recorder built by Ampex, an electronics firm headquartered in the Bay Area, up the stairs of San Francisco's Avalon Ballroom. That night, the Dead became the first act to record live sound with 16 channels, kickstarting a subtle but significant revolution that allowed bands greater control over concert tapes.

"Everybody felt, 'Wow, man, this is going to be such a great trip. How can we *not* record it?'" Cutler says. "Then it was, 'Well, how can we record it so that we *really* capture it?'"

The answer arrived in the form of an Ampex MM-1000, a new machine that adapted video technology for sound by recording onto two-inch tape. It would allow every instrument to be captured independently, so that the shows could be manipulated and mixed after the fact. No one had ever done that for an entire tour.

But the rig, Dan Healy remembers, was "as big as two refrigerators side-by-side and probably as heavy, too," so the prospect of lugging it into 22 unknown rooms bordered on physical abuse. Instead, the crew installed the Ampex in a box truck with a small mixer and a tiny black-and-white video screen, lining the metal walls with blankets. The rig sat outside the stage doors every night, massive bundles of audio cables snaking from the stage into its side.

Each channel had a transformer, capable of boosting the signal without creating any interference. As the band played, Dennis 'Wizard' Leonard and Betty Cantor (now Cantor-Jackson) would listen in on each channel to ensure nothing had gone awry on-stage while taking care that the tape spools wouldn't end during, say, an epic Dark Star. They rated each song on a three-star scale, scribbling scores on tape boxes for future reference.

"The goal was to be as invisible as possible and have everybody be able to hear it, to be right there with the band," remembers Cantor-Jackson, who, in 1972, knew she was pioneering a space for women in live sound while new recruit Candace Brightman did the same with the stage lights. "You hear it like they're playing it."

When the band returned to San Francisco in June, Leonard sat in the headquarters of Alembic, the Dead's audio company, and listened to the entire tour, sussing out any quality concerns. They had actually captured the whole of every show. "Everybody's having a great time, and then in the end you get the tapes, too," Cantor-Jackson says. "We made something out of this."

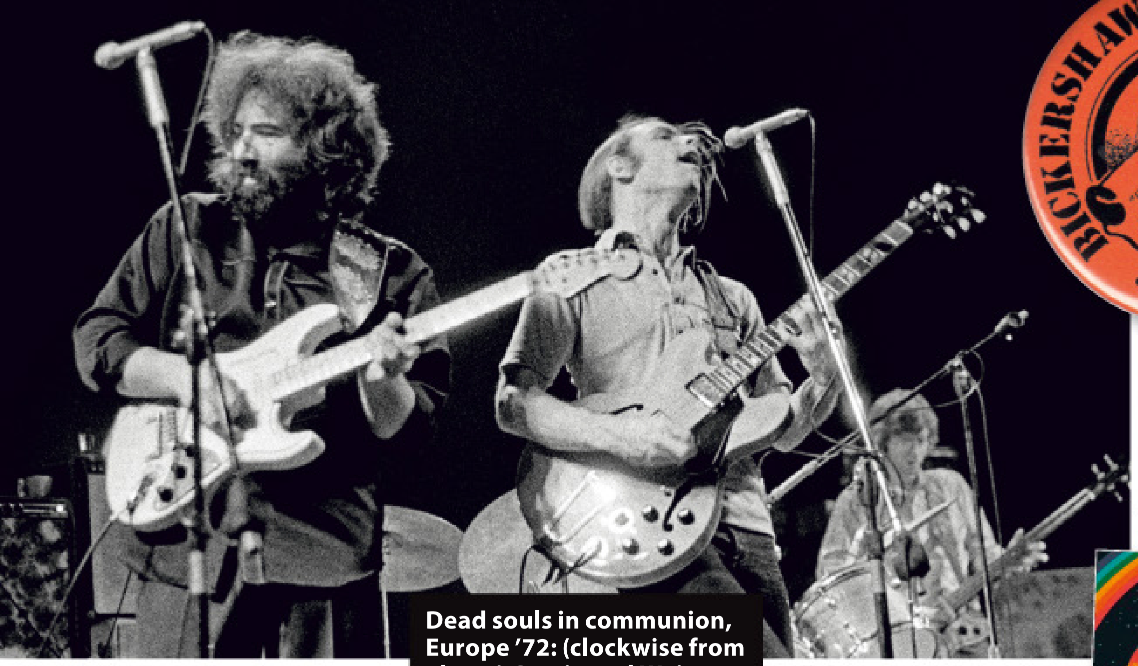
By the end of 1972, the 17-track *Europe '72* had already gone gold, the second consecutive live Dead album to do so.

The work Leonard and Cantor-Jackson did in the rented truck ranks second only to that of the band in importance – it is the living testament to the Dead's flexibility and creativity in 1972, not to mention a document of a new pathway for making records. And like the band they loved, the pair mostly did it while tripping on LSD.

"With our crew, doing your job while you were high was part of what you were doing," says Cantor-Jackson, chuckling. "But I remember looking at the needles on the tape machine once and thinking, 'Are they moving, or am I hallucinating?' At that point, you're inside the music."

THE DEAD HAD PLAYED FOR MORE THAN AN HOUR during the first of two shows at Paris's Olympia when Donna Jean Godchaux realised she had a problem: she was so inside the music she couldn't move.

As the tour entered its second month, the band's bottle of



Dead souls in communion, Europe '72: (clockwise from above) Garcia and Weir step on; Pigpen; sound guru Dan Healy (left); Weir and Donna Jean Godchaux.

"PIGPEN'S ESSENCE WAS SO MAGNANIMOUS. HE WAS SO SICK, BUT HE HELD HIS OWN. HE WAS UNINHIBITED." DONNA JEAN GODCHAUX

concentrated LSD – smuggled across borders with the electrical transformers – had become diluted, meaning enthusiasts were obliged to take more to get the same effect. Donna Jean was up to 15 daily doses before their arrival in Paris, but no one bothered to warn her that the stock had been replenished. She took her usual amount. As the show began, she hid beneath Keith's piano, too high to sing.

"I was listening to the Grateful Dead, and nothing was wrong about the world," she remembers, laughing. "And then I realised I *sang* with this band. I don't know how I got up and made my way back to the microphone, but I did."

When she finally joined to harmonise on Playing In The Band, a dozen songs in, she sounded unguarded and gleeful. Her trademark yowl after the chorus was long and guttural, an exaltation of her new status in the Dead.

Moments that seesawed between adventure and misadventure helped define the entire run. The crew, for instance, had purchased switchblades in bulk in Germany and began brandishing them as if they were Hell's Angels. Rolling Stone's Jerry Hopkins was stunned to see them flashed in Paris's Le Grand Hôtel, freaking out passers-by. Kreutzmann marvelled as the quippies spread long lines of cocaine on the sharp blades of their knives and held them up for one another while rolling down the highway.

"I was wondering when we'd be going to the hospital to stitch somebody's nose," says the drummer. "I said, 'First of all, I'm not going to cut my nose off.'" Kreutzmann swore off cocaine for the tour, even though no one lost a nostril: "It made the band sound much better to me – steadier, more fun."

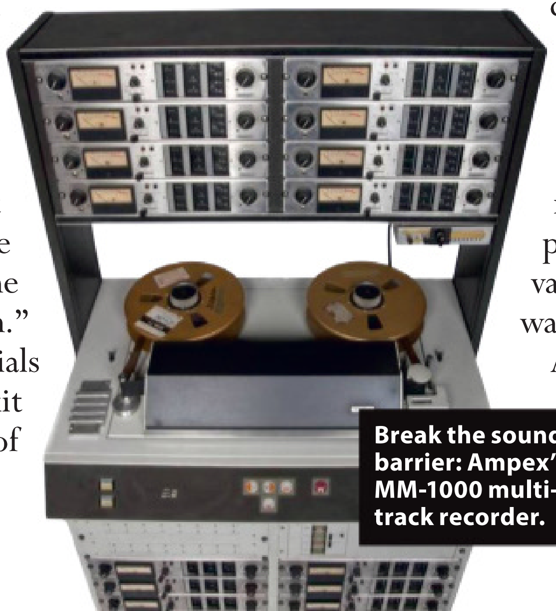
And there was the time Danish customs officials stopped the buses and demanded everyone exit while they searched for contraband. When one of the drivers told Cutler the agents were looking for the hash they smelled, he climbed inside, made small talk, and secretly sprayed Ozium air freshener while he paced. The officials never spotted the two massive bricks, camouflaged by two thin curtains bound together by a rubber band. "Sometimes the best place to hide things is in the open," Cutler says.

The best example of the entourage's resilient belief in happy accidents, however, is the show the Dead never intended to play. During the band's two-night Parisian stand, a student activist in a stylish velvet jacket harassed the Dead about its long-standing apolitical stance, even following them back to their hotel. Veteran quippie Rex Jackson dropped ice cream onto the provocateur from an upstairs window, never anticipating revenge. The next day, the equipment truck wouldn't crank – the student had either poured sugar in the tank or, as Cutler speculated, urinated in it. The band made it to Lille with no gear.

A few members clambered on-stage to explain the situation with the help of Victoria, the Persian girlfriend of Courtenay Pollock, the English-born artist who had made the tie-dyes that covered the band's amplifiers and speakers. Her mannered French didn't calm the crowd, who began to surge backstage. Most of the band escaped out of a window, then down a drainpipe. Cutler lowered Donna Jean himself.

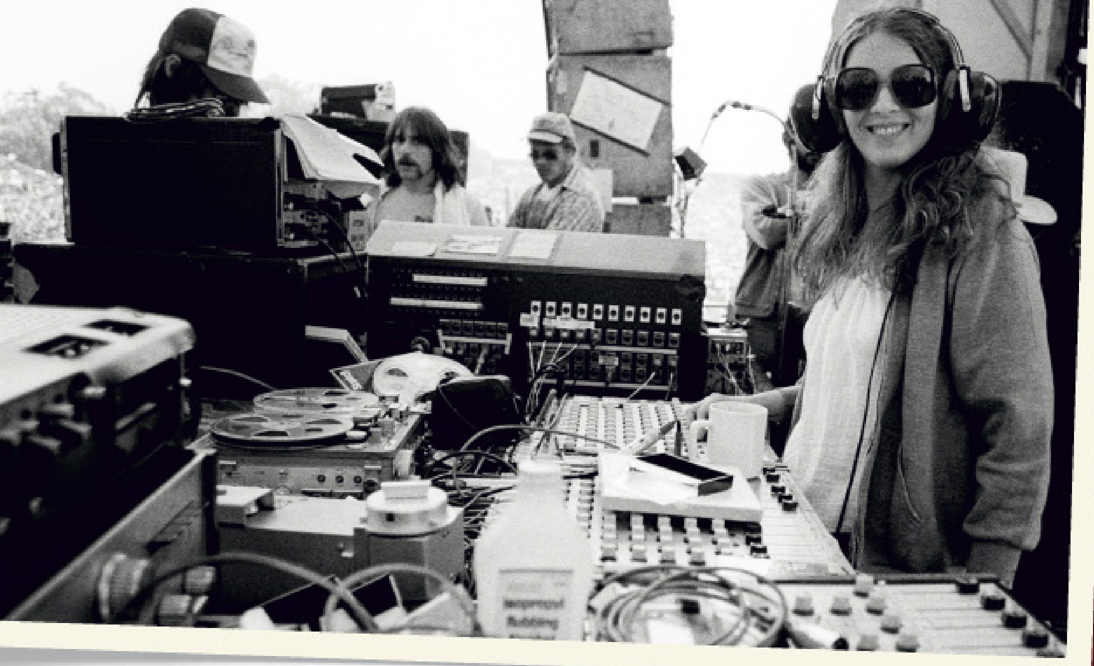
"There were rumblings and stirrings, so we made a beeline," Pollock tells MOJO. "We had parked by the band's backstage, where the caravans were. We had a shortcut through to the highway, so we beat the crowd and made our escape."

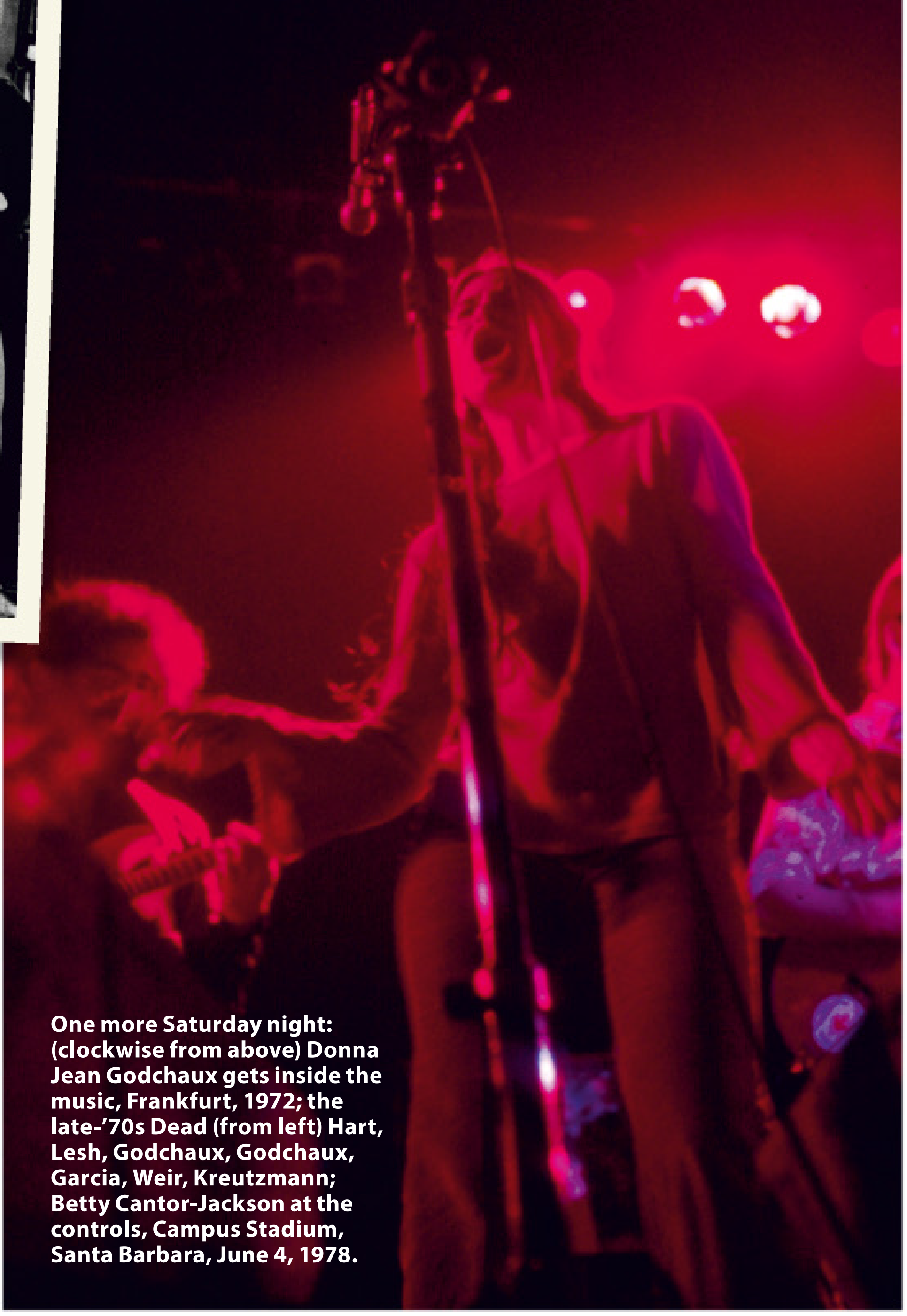
A week later, the Dead returned to the scene of the near-crime to offer a *mea culpa* in the form of a free outdoor show, flanked by ➢



Break the sound barrier: Ampex's MM-1000 multi-track recorder.

Courtesy of Mark Cooper (2), Mary Ann Mayer (2), Barry Wentzell, Ron Rakow/Retro Photo Archive





One more Saturday night: (clockwise from above) Donna Jean Godchaux gets inside the music, Frankfurt, 1972; the late-'70s Dead (from left) Hart, Lesh, Godchaux, Godchaux, Garcia, Weir, Kreutzmann; Betty Cantor-Jackson at the controls, Campus Stadium, Santa Barbara, June 4, 1978.

"I REMEMBER LOOKING AT THE NEEDLES ON THE TAPE MACHINE AND THINKING, 'ARE THEY MOVING, OR AM I HALLUCINATING?'" BETTY CANTOR-JACKSON

towering trees. It was a working-class afternoon crowd, Cutler recalls, and the Dead rose to the occasion with a relatively short set (less than three hours) that still got loose. The day's 29-minute rendition of The Other One was aggressive and agile, the band suspended indefinitely in its complicated rhythmic tangle.

Cutler, meanwhile, got so high he wandered into the suburbs. He spoke no French, but the locals assumed he had something to do with the hippies at the fairgrounds. When they returned him unscathed, the stage, buses, and band were already headed back to Paris. He had their money and passports.

"The Grateful Dead's whole thing was that, in any given situation, somebody will step up. Nobody is, in the final analysis, totally indispensable," he says, making an exception for Garcia. "But what was quite embarrassing was when I finally got to Paris nobody said anything – 'welcome back', 'where you been', nothing."

ON THE FLIGHT BACK TO THE US, BETTY CANTOR and Rex Jackson finally admitted they had feelings for one another. She had known it for some time, but his wild life as a quippie made her worry about a commitment. "Once we were on the road together for two months, we couldn't deny it," Cantor-Jackson says. "On the flight home, we were moon-eyed." A year after returning from Europe, they married, welcoming their only child, Cole, nine months later.

But Cutler's troubled re-entry was more emblematic of the Dead's return, as it presaged hard times to come for the band. The stress had finally caught up with the tour manager, riddling his stomach with ulcers before his 30th birthday. He checked into a Marin County hospital two days after arriving in California, where doctors removed nearly a third of his stomach. Only Pigpen visited.

"The Grateful Dead aren't too good at sympathy," says Cutler, who has been fighting cancer for eight years, with a soft chuckle. "Europe was a highlight, extraordinary. It almost killed me."

Weeks after the final European date – the London Lyceum show of May 26 – Pigpen played his last show with the Grateful Dead at the Hollywood Bowl. His health had begun to crater. In early March 1973, less than a year after the band had landed in Europe, McKernan's landlord found him in his apartment, dead for two days with the lights still on. Years of alcohol abuse had taken a toll on his body, but a congenital autoimmune disease called primary biliary cholangitis had killed him, and later would also take his brother Kevin.

"We didn't see our friends dying on us at that age. My God," says Cantor-Jackson, still shaken by Pigpen's death. "You think, He'll do less drinking or take some more time, get better, and go on."

The Grateful Dead would continue, of course, until Garcia's death in 1995; in assorted configurations, they persist even now. They would become wildly popular, too, selling out the world's biggest stadiums. But the cultural *naiveté* and musical wonder of their first true European foray would never again appear in tandem.

The Dead returned to Europe for a dangerously drugged and fractious string of shows in 1974. The bloom had fallen from the rose. "It was a very different scene from 1972," McNally wrote, "without family or any sense of adventure or vacation." In Melody Maker, Garcia lamented the large scale of the operation. A month later, back home, the band played a five-night stand at San Francisco's Winterland Arena and called it quits for nearly two years.

"Things change when things get bigger," sighs Donna Jean Godchaux. "They get more complicated. But it was pure Grateful Dead back then – magical and innocent and beautiful."

A variety of Grateful Dead Europe '72 50th Anniversary audio releases and other merchandise will be available this year. Visit dead.net, the band's official website.

Courtesy of David Lemieux, Getty (2)

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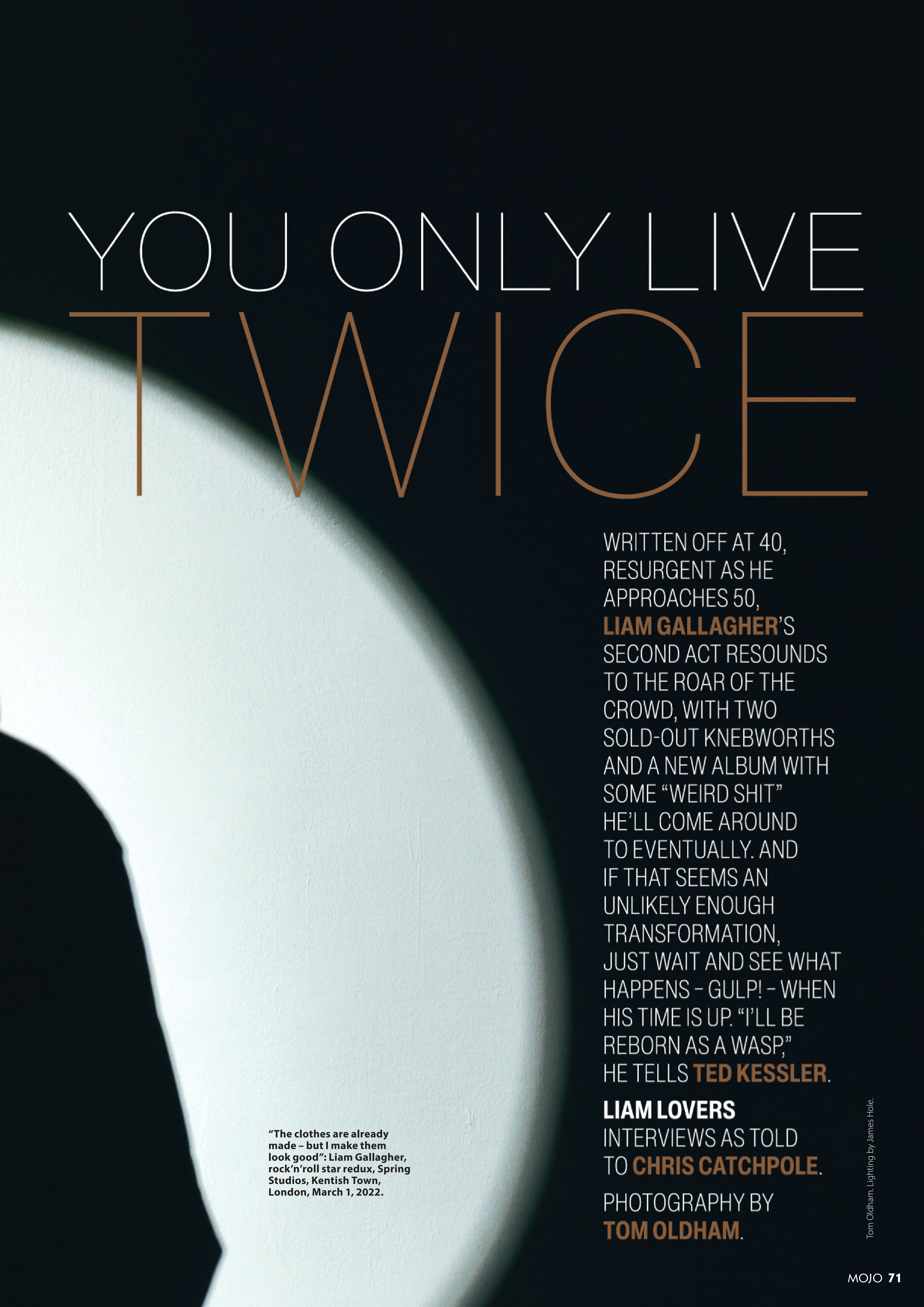


YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE

WRITTEN OFF AT 40, RESURGENT AS HE APPROACHES 50, **LIAM GALLAGHER**'S SECOND ACT RESOUNDS TO THE ROAR OF THE CROWD, WITH TWO SOLD-OUT KNEBWORTHS AND A NEW ALBUM WITH SOME "WEIRD SHIT" HE'LL COME AROUND TO EVENTUALLY. AND IF THAT SEEMS AN UNLIKELY ENOUGH TRANSFORMATION, JUST WAIT AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS – GULP! – WHEN HIS TIME IS UP. "I'LL BE REBORN AS A WASP," HE TELLS **TED KESSLER**.

LIAM LOVERS INTERVIEWS AS TOLD TO **CHRIS CATCHPOLE**.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **TOM OLDHAM**.

"The clothes are already made – but I make them look good": Liam Gallagher, rock'n'roll star redux, Spring Studios, Kentish Town, London, March 1, 2022.

Tom Oldham. Lighting by James Hole.

DO YOU REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME YOU SAW HIM? PERHAPS HE WAS on stage, hands behind his back, leaning into the microphone from beneath it, chest puffed, belting the words out from somewhere deep within his guts. Yearning, sneering, calling your name.

More likely, though, you first spied him on TV. Press the red button, The Chart Show's on. A rudimentary drum beat sounds. Boom-tish-boom-boom-tish-boom-tish-boom-boom-tish. Fingers slide down the neck of an Epiphone Les Paul Standard guitar and there he is, William John Paul Gallagher, doing a Mancunian duck walk across the roof of a building next to King's Cross Station in London. He tip-toes in soft shoes through a puddle, before the camera closes in on his poker face. Tousled hair. Eyebrows. Corduroy jacket, top-button fastened. Transparent shades. He opens his mouth to sing: "I need to be myself, I can't be no one else…"

It's a manifesto, a mitigation, and – so it would turn out – his policy for musical governance over the next four decades, all laid out in his very first recorded lines sung for public consumption, way back in April, 1994. Give that man a gin and tonic.

And here he is again as the clock strikes noon, in March 2022, climbing from a blacked-out people carrier outside The Standard Hotel, directly across Euston Road from that now-demolished rooftop upon which Liam Gallagher opened his Oasis account almost exactly 28 years ago.

Some water has passed beneath the bridge since then. King's Cross is revamped, barely recognisable. Gallagher, however, looks more-or-less identical. A little more timber, perhaps, hence the baggy yellow parka and comfy strides. And who knows what lurks beneath that cap? "Bit fucking blowy out there, innit?" he explains, patting down his hair, before quickly replacing the hat.

For a man who's fast approaching his 50th birthday, however, Gallagher looks in good shape. He could pass as 10 years younger. No, no Botox ("fuck that"). The landmark birthday in September, which he plans to celebrate in Mustique with his family, does not feel like a big deal to the one-time Oasis frontman, despite his reputation for youthful exuberance, or perhaps because of it.

"Once you join a band, it's your birthday every day," he reasons, as we wait by the lifts. "If you're not getting up at six in the morning to go dig holes in the road then you've sort of made it. Buddhists say that getting up every morning is another birthday, you know."

He considers this.

"I mean, it really is *my* birthday every fucking day!" he declares, with a laugh. "Every day, man."

We climb into the elevator and head to an eighth-floor suite to further explore this notion.

Tom Oldham, Getty

LIAM LOVERS #1

"HE DOESN'T TAKE ANY PRISONERS"

Who man **ROGER DALTREY** applauds a fellow belter, in more ways than one...

"The first time I heard Liam was on Wonderwall. It was hard to ignore it at the time and Liam's voice is stamped all over it. It was Lennon-esque to me, but he is totally identifiable. That's the most important thing with rock singers. When you hear the great rock'n'roll singers you know who they are immediately, and Liam is one of them. Is it the greatest voice in rock? Probably not. Is he the greatest singer in rock? Probably not. But as a whole package he's fantastic. He's the real deal. He's not a pretender like a lot of lads out there. He doesn't take any prisoners. And as I bloke I love him.

He understands the rules of what makes rock work, too. All those fights that the brothers have, Noel must realise it's good because it keeps them in the news. We used to slag each other off something terrible in The Who, we used to actually have fist fights, but in the end that's what makes bands great and what makes the creative process even more successful because it makes it volatile. It's never dull and that is one thing you can say about Liam – he's never dull!"

WHEN OASIS SPLIT AMIDST THE fractured remains of their Parisian dressing-room in August 2009, the future for the two principal leads, singer Liam and guitarist Noel Gallagher, was unknowable.

Predictions could have been made, though. Noel was the brains of the operation, the songwriter. He'd be fine. In fact, he'd flourish without his unpredictable, unadventurous younger brother holding him back. Noel would still be able to turn out a tune or two, but he could experiment, collaborate. It would be Noel's glorious second act.

Liam's path looked less certain. He couldn't really write songs on a reliable basis. He's a magnificent singer, instantly recognisable, but he isn't versatile. Could he only really sing those Noel Gallagher belters and anthems? Where would he be without his brother?

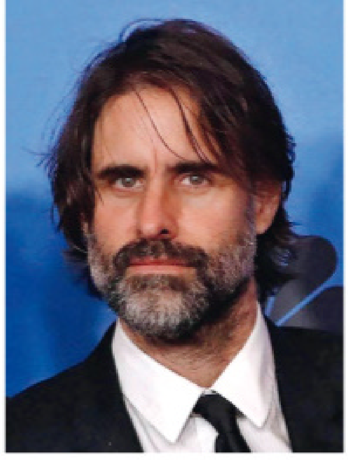
Initially, the forecasts appeared correct. Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds released a playful debut album in 2011 that went double platinum domestically. Liam Gallagher formed Beady Eye with the remaining members of Oasis. They were not quite as successful, and split in 2014 after two middling albums. It seemed then that Noel would continue his ascent, while Liam was washed up, done. Kaput. Even his haircut looked worse than Noel's.

Yet here we are in the early spring of 2022 and the tables are turned. Liam's solo career, launched with his first album under his own name, *As You Were*, in 2017, has been an era-defining commercial success.

When something works well, its design often appears obvious in retrospect. However, it was not clear in 2015 or 2016 how Liam Gallagher could mend his relationship with the listening public, at a time when he was also navigating divorce from his wife, former All Saints singer Nicole Appleton. His then-management assistant, Debbie Gwyther, ➢

"I DON'T WANT TO BE A POP STAR. THE THOUGHT OF THAT MAKES ME WANT TO JUMP OFF A FUCKING ROOF."

Every day is his birthday: Liam gets ready to party, 2022; (insets) scenes from the Oasis Supersonic video shoot near King's Cross Station, 1994.



became his partner, then his manager, and helped plot a way out, introducing Gallagher to American songwriters Andrew Wyatt and Greg Kurstin, who would write the songs to reconnect Liam with all his fans, both old and new.

Wyatt and Kurstin executed a simple plan to perfection. They brushed up the classic Oasis formula of direct, Beatles-influenced pop-rock, redesigned for Liam's best vocal register after a decade of straining after notes that weren't quite there, and watched *As You Were* sail to Number 1 in the UK albums chart aboard 100,000 first week sales – more than the rest of the Top 10 combined. Perhaps all it took for Liam Gallagher to get his groove back were fresh ears working with him, and *for* him. It sounds easy, doesn't it? So, two years later, they did the same thing again, and *Why Me? Why Not* became another massive hit album.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the commercial rebirth of Liam Gallagher has manifested itself at the enormous concerts he's been selling out. They're filled with teenagers, with lads in their twenties (Noel calls them "parka monkeys"). Often, these youngsters will be accompanied by their own dads and uncles, their mums and big sisters, fellow Gallagher nuts who've been going to Oasis gigs for decades. Liam will play the best Oasis songs – Live Forever, Morning Glory, Acquiesce, Wonderwall, Rock'n'Roll Star – mix them with his new songs, and every number will be greeted as warmly as family returning home from battle.

Before he'd even revealed details of his third solo album, *C'mon You Know*, due out next month, Gallagher announced stadium shows at the Etihad in Manchester on June 1 and Hampden Park in Glasgow on June 26. Sandwiched eye-catchingly between, on June 3 and 4, are two ambitious-looking nights at Knebworth Park (capacity 80,000 per night), site of course of Oasis's famous two-night residency in 1996, marking their commercial peak.

Liam immediately sold out both, before anyone had heard any of his album – before he'd even finished recording it. Amazing.

"Massive," he agrees. "Blows my mind. Not that I've thought about it yet… Well, I have, maybe, a little, on the sly. Don't tell anyone."

NOEL GALLAGHER, WHOSE CAREER thrives on a slightly more modest level, is also on tour during June. He does not have anything pencilled in on that first Knebworth date; his tour starts in Margate on June 8. Oasis fan message boards are alive with rumour…

"No!" snorts Liam. "Noel won't join us. It's mad people even think that. Wishful thinking. It's not Spinal Tap, mate. He'll be hiding away trying to convince himself that playing to 2,000 people in Scunthorpe is somehow more attractive than playing to 80,000 in Knebworth. He had his chance."

Liam rests his chin in his hand, considering the differences in their tour routing. "It goes to show it's not all about the people who write the songs. Sometimes, it's about personalities and characters. The voice. People give the singer shit (*whiny Southern accent*), 'He didn't write the songs, the other one is the talent, the brains in the band…' Maybe I'm the soul. I'm the one who put it in the back of the net. Scoring a goal is the hardest part of the game, isn't it?"

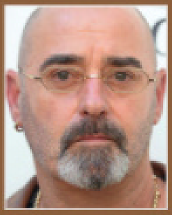
When Liam Gallagher has made his point, he often just stops and holds your gaze for as long as it takes to sink in.

Eventually, he breaks the silence. "Got any fags?"

LIAM LOVERS #2

"I DON'T THINK *HE* KNEW HE WANTED TO BE A SINGER"

PAUL ARTHURS – AKA Bonehead – on a force of nature, in Oasis and beyond.



"I knew Liam was a great vocalist from the minute I first heard him. We had three songs roughly done and he came in and sang them in the living room round my house. I didn't even know he wanted to be a singer. I don't think *he* knew he wanted to be a singer, he just knew that he wanted to front a band.

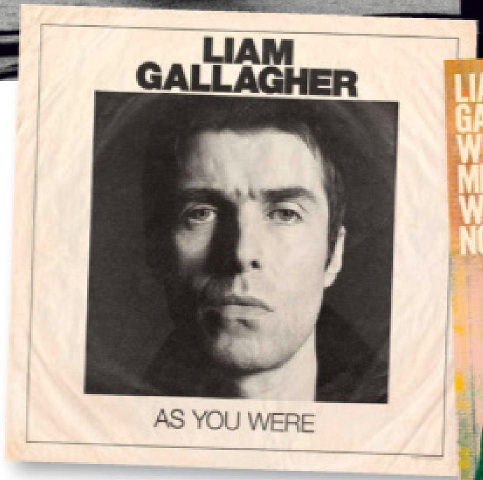
He certainly looked the part, but as far as the voice went I'd never heard him sing until he opened his mouth in that room. It was a different Liam from the one we know today, but what came out made it pretty obvious that he had it. We knew that Noel wrote songs and he came down to have a jam with us. On the first day he was playing us stuff like Live Forever and Cigarettes And Alcohol – we were like, 'Jesus Christ!' But once Liam put his voice to them, it was just immediate.

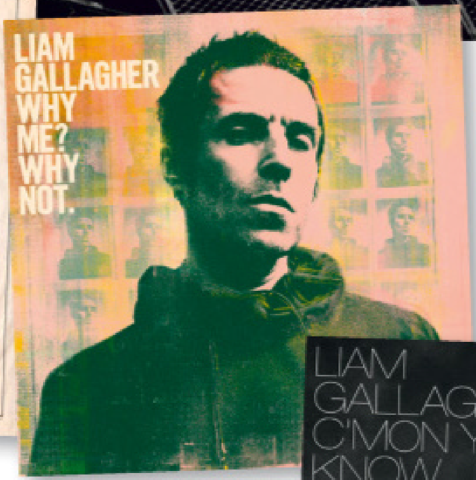
We didn't know we'd go on to be the band we would become but we knew there was something there, big time. Our first gig was at the Boardwalk in Manchester. We were pretty nervy but Liam immediately had that stance behind the microphone. He had that presence on-stage immediately. There was probably about 10 people in the room, but there might have been 10,000 in the room in Liam's head.

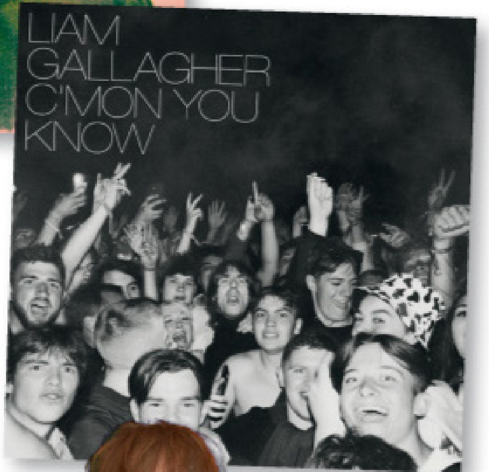
It's more than his voice with Liam. He was the type of person before we even started the band that you'd see walking down the road and just the way he carried himself, the way he dressed himself, the way he cut his hair. Even as a kid, he was always someone that you'd look at on the road and you think, 'Who's that?!?'

It's the whole package with Liam. He's got a real punk voice, but you never heard John Lydon sit down and sing a country & western ballad and Liam could. People say with Liam, 'Oh he hasn't got the range for this, that and the other…' but believe you me, he has got it. He still has."

Alamy (2), Getty (2)







"NOEL'LL BE TRYING TO CONVINCE HIMSELF THAT PLAYING TO 2,000 PEOPLE IN SCUNTHORPE IS MORE ATTRACTIVE THAN PLAYING TO 80,000 IN KNEBWORTH."

We step out on to the suite's large balcony overlooking north-east London to take in the view of St Paul's.

"Where's Euston?" asks Liam.

It was at Euston Station, lying a few hundred yards behind us, that Liam alighted with some of his friends on one of his first trips to London. He was 19, 20 maybe. It was before Oasis. He'd come down on the train to watch his football team Manchester City play at either Crystal Palace or Charlton – he can't remember much about the match.

But he can remember that afterwards, as he and his pals lolled around on the grass outside Euston awaiting their last train home, smoking dope, a smartly-suited man approached them.

"Excuse me lads," said this man. "Where are you boys from?"

"I'll always remember he was wearing this three-piece suit," recalls Liam. "Waist-coat, really shiny shoes. He looked like an estate agent. I said, We're from Manchester, pal! As soon as I said that all these other fellas in suits suddenly appeared and this guy whips out a cosh! They were all tooled-up, coshes and blades, mad West Ham fans. He looked like Gary Oldman in The Firm. A proper crafty Cockney."

Gallagher and his friends leapt to their feet and sprinted into the station, the estate agent hooligans in roaring pursuit. The station concourse parted. As they got to the platform the guards tried to stop Liam from running on, but he pushed by them. He could feel the pursuers chasing hard around the bend.

"So I jumped in a mail sack, hid in there until they cleared off."

When he got back to his mum Peggy's house in Burnage, he vowed to give the capital a swerve in future. It wasn't for him.

Now, though, he's lived in London for as long as Manchester. It's home. "Funny how things turn out."

SHORTLY BEFORE *WHY ME? WHY NOT* CAME out in 2019, Liam Gallagher expressed a desire to make a very different-sounding third album.

"I'd love to make a punk record, like The Stooges," he said then. "Otherwise you fall into that trap of, 'Oh, here's another ballad.' I don't want to do any ballads next time. I just want to make something raucous. I'd love to do an angry record, no strings."

C'mon You Know does not sound like The Stooges, nor is it a punk record. It doesn't feel angry. In fact, if there's a theme it's one more of reconciliation, a realisation of ➢

Jill Furmanovsky, Getty (3)

All his world's a stage: (clockwise from opposite page) Rock En Seine heralds 'game over' for Oasis, August 28, 2009; Liam with Beady Eye (from left) Andy Bell, Gem Archer, Chris Sharrock, 2013; songwriters Andrew Wyatt (top) and Greg Kurstin; on-stage with Oasis, Slane Castle, July 22, 1995; at Isle Of Wight Festival, 2021; solo LPs; with partner Debbie Gwyther.

one's place in the universe. There are a few ballads, plenty of strings. The album opens with a choir.

"It is a bit different to the others, though," says Liam. It's true. There's a richer sound than the previous albums, more instrumentation amid mini-breaks of psychedelia, some soulful pop in amongst the classic Gallagherisms.

"At first, there was some straightforward classic songwriting."

He makes a lemon-sucking face.

"Then Andrew [Wyatt] started sending over these mad bits of music. I thought if there's a time to be doing weird shit, that time is now. And if people don't like it, then we can blame it on Covid, can't we? 'Liam Gallagher? Oh, he got confused by Covid, didn't he? Went all weird for a bit. Give him a minute, he'll be all right.'"

The pandemic did not hugely affect Liam's work schedule. He'd finished touring *Why Me? Why Not* shortly before the shutdown so he was due a break, which he took largely at home in Highgate, north London. He bought a tipi to hang out in in the garden and had a studio booth built in his house. That's where he'd add vocals to the demos that Wyatt, Kurstin or Simon Aldred of Cherry Ghost sent over for his consideration.

"Debbie helps out when I'm recording, pressing the buttons," he expands. "I call her Phyllis Spector."

Then they'd all get on a Zoom call and chat about what they liked and what they didn't.

"It's boring as fuck, to be fair," concedes Gallagher. "It ain't what it's meant to be. I'd much rather be in a band, all bashing it out together. But as long as it sounds good, that's all that matters."

The songs are re-delivered to Liam largely finished. He'll make a few tweaks to the lyrics – "My phrasings and that. I'll say, Make the sound more Stones-y or whatever" – but by and large his role is to sing the songs, to bring the missing ingredient to the dish.

"The clothes are already made," he summarises. "But I put them on, make them look good."

WHEN THE SONGS FOR *C'MON You Know* were ready, Wyatt flew to London from California and together they went into RAK Studios, then into Air Studios, then back to RAK to get them down. By November 2021, the album was finished.

Wisely, they've sequenced the most arresting song first. More Power opens with a choir singing the main refrain before blooming into a kind of Rolling Stones and Spiritualized hybrid.

"Basically, You Can't Always Get What You Want," says Liam, unambiguously.

The lyrics are interesting. It begins with Liam addressing his parents individually: "Mother," he sings, "I admit I was angry for too long…"

"I don't know what that's about," he says now, with a shrug. "I mean, I suppose I am less angry than I was, but then again what's angry?"

He starts to have an argument with his own song.

"Anger? It's passion. One day I'm chilled, the next I'm an angry cunt. It depends on what I've had for dinner. Depends on the weather."

The chorus to More Power is a surprising declaration from a renowned and internationally successful rock star: "I wish I had more power," he sings, but it's not clear how that power would manifest itself. Would it mean self-restraint? Would he like to rule over people? Why does he need more power?

"I don't wish I had more power," he admits.

Oh.

"It's just a song," he says, laughing. "I don't want more power! I know who I am, I'm very happy with what I'm about. It was probably directed at someone else. Maybe they want more power? I don't know."

We soon ascertain that despite some direct, apparently confessional lyrics, Liam doesn't have much he wants to say about them.

"I'm happy for other people to dig into them, get your spade out, but for me a song is a song. I don't overthink it. If it sounds good and I sound good when I sing it then it's all right with me. If it sounds forced, I fuck it off."

For a moment or two, we talk about some of the songs on *C'mon You Know* anyway. It feels like the right thing to do in the circumstances. Turns out, it's not. He doesn't want to analyse his music, he says. "I know a lot of people want that muso shit, but I'm not interested."

Tomorrow, rehearsals with the band begin. "The songs are gonna sound a lot better live, trust me. More bollocky," he declares.

For an unusual moment, the interviewer is forced to reassure the interviewee that his forthcoming album sounds great.

"I know it sounds good," he agrees, thankfully. "I'm happy with it. But we'll filth it up in rehearsals a bit. Bonehead's in the live band now and he'll give it some of that chuggy sound."

Deep down, perhaps "that chuggy sound" imparted by Oasis's original rhythm guitarist may not satisfy Liam, creatively.

"I still want to make an out-and-out Stooges album," he confesses. "No keyboards. No Beatlemania. A proper punk record. That's what this one was going to be but I'm a sucker for a ballad and a nice melody."

This is of course what he said just before the release of his last album.

"I know! I need to have a word with myself. I need to limit myself to guitar, bass and drums. Ten songs, in your face – but good songs. Staying away from twee melodies. But it's totally down to me. I have no discipline once I hear a nice, flowery melody. I need a total Beatles ban. And a Stones ban. Next time, I'm just gonna get in the studio with a band and bash it out. Not even mix it. Just have it as it's coming off the desk."

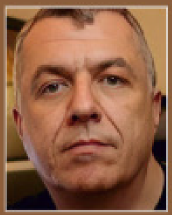
The mixing and mastering of albums is a bugbear. He stands up from the table and starts pacing.

"Sometimes these mixes take all the rawness out. Does it have to be mixed? (*Affects posh voice*) 'Well, yeah, that's how music works, especially if you want it on the radio…' I'm not arsed if it gets on the radio. Get the levels right, but don't smother it. It doesn't need a perm. Leave it. But then it won't get on the radio and everyone will start crying, won't they?" ➢

LIAM LOVERS #3

"HE'S ONE OF THE GREATEST SINGERS OF ALL TIME"

Oasis producer **OWEN MORRIS** remembers a young man in a hurry.



"I think I first saw Oasis at The Boardwalk in Manchester, a year or two before they started getting noticed. And we first met properly at Loco Studios in south Wales when I recorded Liam singing on Rock'n'Roll Star. I mixed that and Columbia the same weekend.

He was funny, very cocky and could obviously sing. I'd heard that he thought he sounded like John Lennon and John Lydon so I told him that he sounded like Lennon – he liked that. After about four or five takes, I had to tell him to fuck off so I could get on with my work, because he wouldn't stop talking.

Liam was always a pleasure to record. He was always enthusiastic. He was always extremely professional and he didn't fuck around. He wanted to get every song sang the very best he could. I loved recording him. I think all of his singing from *Definitely Maybe* onwards shows that he's one of the greatest singers of all time and those songs wouldn't have impacted in the same way if it wasn't for Liam. Would I like to work with him again? Maybe, depending on the circumstances."

Courtesy Owen Morris, Tom Sheehan, Tom Oldham

"I'M RIDING ON FRANKIE DETTORI'S BACK **TOPLESS ALONG THIS BEACH FOR ABOUT 20 MINUTES,** WHIPPING HIS ARSE."

Dressed to impress: Liam Gallagher makes his point, London, 2022; (opposite page) with Noel Gallagher and Oasis producer Owen Morris, Loco Studios, south Wales, 1995.

"I STILL WANT TO MAKE **AN OUT-AND-OUT STOOGES ALBUM.** NO KEYBOARDS. NO BEATLEMANIA. **A PROPER PUNK RECORD.**"

◄ Does it matter now what other people think? After all, he's Liam Gallagher.

"I know! I'm Liam Gallagher! Why do I worry? That's what I want to do. I don't want to be a pop star. The thought of that makes me want to jump off that fucking roof."

He can do what he wants, surely. He's sold out two Knebworths without anybody even hearing the record.

"Ex-fucking-actly. And I'm nearly 50. And I can barely walk."

He grabs the packet of cigarettes from the table and makes a conspiratorial nod to the balcony.

"No," he says, as we step through the doors. "I'm buzzing. I can't wait for these gigs."

DESPITE THE SATISFACTION OF HIS MID-LIFE career rebirth, the approach to Liam Gallagher's 50th has not been pain-free. Far from it. He needs a double-hip replacement for starters.

"My hips are fucked," he says. "I've got arthritis, bad. I went to get it checked out and my bones are mashed up. The lady was going, 'Oh you might need a hip operation, a replacement.' No way. 'Oh, it's not as bad as you think, the recovery will only be a couple of months.'"

He is aghast.

"You're all right. I think I'd rather just be in pain." He considers this declaration. "Which is ridiculous, obviously. I know that. Just get them fixed. But it's also the stigma, saying you've had your hips replaced. What's next?"

The arthritis in his hips, which is linked to a thyroid issue, means Gallagher can no longer enjoy jogging on Hampstead Heath – for many years his favourite hobby outside of a pub. He's forced to walk instead. Even the knowledge that the hip replacement would allow him to run again isn't enough to convince him to have the operation.

"I'd be able to do it all after the op. I'd be like Louie Spence, throwing my leg over my shoulder while playing the flute."

He mimes playing the flute while swinging his leg around. It looks painful.

"I don't mind a little pain. Keeps you on your toes. Pain is OK. I'm definitely on the downwards slide, though. Oh yes. My eyes are fucked, my hips are fucked, got the old thyroid. But we're all going to die, aren't we? Or are we already dead?"

He shrugs. It's time for some philosophy.

"Maybe we're already in heaven. Or hell? How do you know where you are? How do you know dying is death?"

Have we returned to Buddhism? Liam continues, unabated.

"No one knows. When you're dead, you're dead, right, but you might already be dead. And this… (*gestures around the room*) what is it? We don't know, do we?"

Well…

"I'm not afraid of death, whatever it is. Why should you be? It's going to happen anyway. It's like being afraid of being born. One minute you're here. We might have already died and been born. I'm just going to keep doing what I do until I die. Or I'm reborn and turn into a wasp. Or a butterfly. Or a packet of Scampi fucking Fries."

Although he plays a few old songs live, Liam is not one for nostalgia. Watching Knebworth 1996, the 2021 documentary about the time Oasis played there, Liam was struck by how bad the band sounded, and also what he calls his "giddy jazz hands". It made him determined to ensure that Knebworth 2022 is a significant improvement. That begins backstage. "We're all getting Airstream trailers this time. Last time, Oasis were in a shit Portakabin and John Squire – who was only on-stage for about two minutes – got an Airstream on his own. Fixing that."

By and large he ignores the past, though, so as not to be disappointed by it. He's forward-facing.

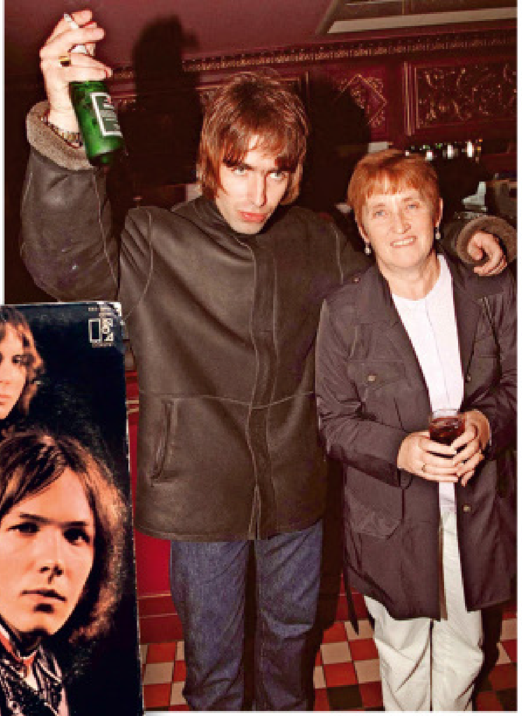
"I don't get out the old scrapbook, no. 'Gather around children, it's that time of the month. Deborah, light the fire, put me slippers on, bring me one of those sweets that old cunts eat…'"

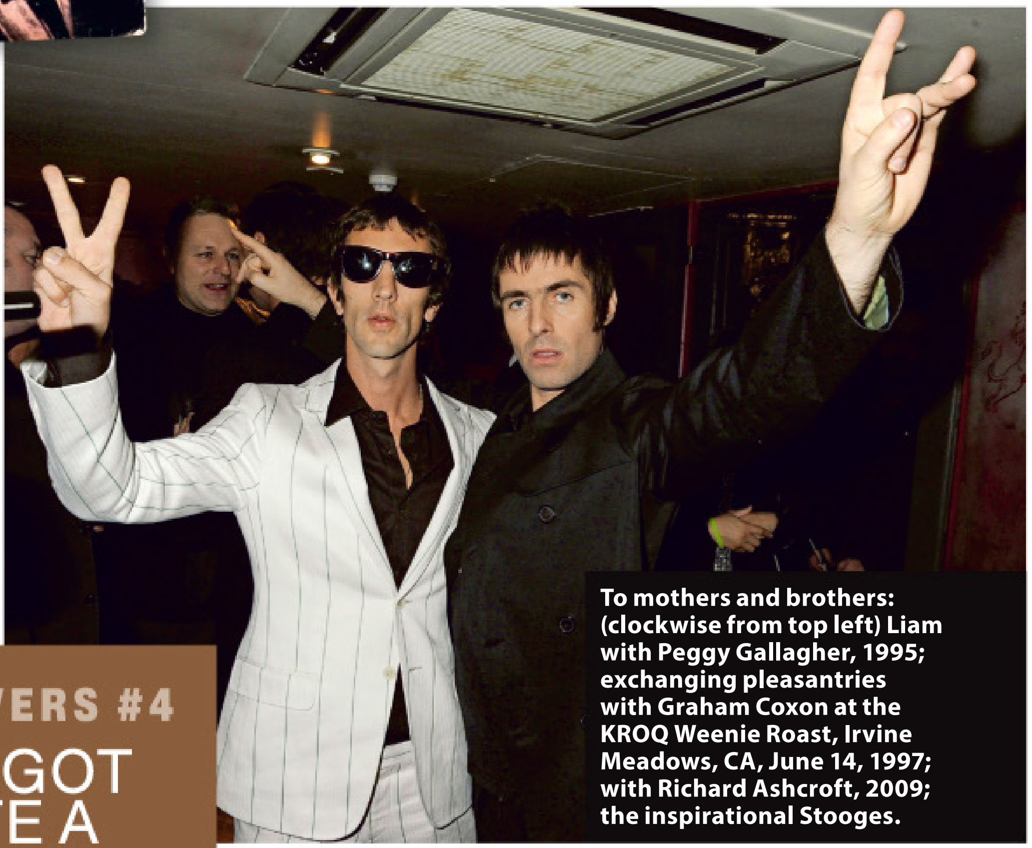
Werther's Original?

"'Bring me my Werther's Original and my scrapbook, children, and let me tell you a story about a little band from Manchester that went by the name of Oasis…' I don't think so."

He must have surely had conversations about Oasis with his sons, Lennon and Gene?

"They're not interested! They're into weird music. Lennon's got a band, plays guitar, and they're doing that mathematical rock. Have you





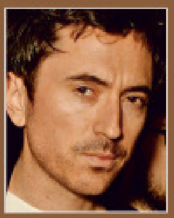
To mothers and brothers: (clockwise from top left) Liam with Peggy Gallagher, 1995; exchanging pleasantries with Graham Coxon at the KROQ Weenie Roast, Irvine Meadows, CA, June 14, 1997; with Richard Ashcroft, 2009; the inspirational Stooges.

Shutterstock, Getty (3)

LIAM LOVERS #4

"HE'S GOT QUITE A UNIQUE IDIOM"

DREW McCONNELL, Liam band bassist, ex-Babyshambles, on "intuitive" Liam.



"Being in a band with Liam, he's very intuitive. He knows what he wants and he's got a very funny, but very understandable, way of communicating it. He's got quite a unique idiom. For instance, yesterday in rehearsals there was a keyboard part that Christian [Madden] was playing and he was like, 'Yeah, it just sounds a bit Harry Potter…' Everyone laughed but we knew *exactly* what he meant.

For me, what makes me doubt somebody as a singer is if the way they sing sounds affected or insincere in any way. I think a lot of singers would do well to be aware of what they're singing and sing it with the tone that you would say it. With people who are excellent singers, the temptation is to show off and do all the flourishes and the gymnastics. When Liam sings you don't doubt that he means every word that he sings for every second. That's what makes him great and that's what makes people believe him.

I find the times when I like a song, but I don't love it, most of the time is because I don't believe the singer. I believe every word Liam sings."

"Some days I need restraining": Gallagher gets his hips in gear.

heard that kind of music? Math rock. It's not for me. Black Midi, they're into that. I can't listen to it. You have to count as you play, right? They're obviously not taking drugs. They can't be."

Liam takes out his phone and in the largest possible font taps out a message for Debbie to come and pick him up from the suite. Time for a spot of lunch, before heading home. He wants to get back to inspect the progress of the steam room that's being built in an outhouse in his garden. He hopes it'll ease the pain in his hips.

"When the weather's cold my hips are like, snap, crackle and pop," he says, emptying a couple of ibuprofen from the pack he threw on the table when we sat down. "I need warmth."

It sounds excruciating. "I can't sleep at night for the pain. Tossing and turning. So I'm on the herbal sleeping tablets and they've saved my life. One of them, seven hours out, no pain, nothing."

He catches my eye. "You're laughing at me!"

I just think you should have the operation. It'll be better in the long run.

"No, no, I can't. Just the thought. They have to break your hips! I asked the lady what the downside was. 'You might die in surgery.' Fuck off! 'Oh, it's a one in a million chance.' I'm not going to crisp it having my hip cracked, thank you. I'd rather be in a wheelchair, with Debbie pushing me around, like Little Britain…"

The key card sounds in the door. Debbie Gwyther is here to collect Liam, without a wheelchair – for now.

EARLY ON MARCH 17, LIAM GALLAGHER TWEETS: "Happy St Patrick's day Guinness Guinness Guinness (shamrock emoji) LG x" to his 3.5 million followers.

True to his word, at noon we discover Liam in the sun-soaked garden of The Spaniards Inn pub opposite Hampstead Heath, raising his first Guinness of the day to his favourite saint. In tribute, Liam is wearing a green Stone Island hat with flappy ears and a fluffy green coat over a tracksuit top with green peace-symbols stamped on it. His three-month sabbatical from alcohol is over and his spirits are high, his pecker is up.

Tom Oldham

This will come as a shock to anyone who saw the report a few days earlier that claimed that according to 'AI emotion technology' applied to more than '22,000 photos on the Instagram accounts of Britain's most followed musicians' Liam Gallagher was the country's most miserable celebrity. He read this with surprise as well.

"It actually made me smile," he quips. "I was livid. No way am I miserable. I'm pretty deadpan, but inside there's a party going on. Fuck Instagram, check my Twitter. I'm a buzz, mate. I'm too much. Some days I need restraining."

Today is also the Jewish festival of Purim ("cheers to all the Irish Jews!") and the penultimate day of the Cheltenham Festival. Liam's not a big racing fan, but he does have some top-class jockey experience. "We met Frankie Dettori on holiday once," he remembers. "Tiny! Frankie bet us that he was stronger than any of us even though he's half my size." Champion jockey Dettori dropped to his knees and ordered Liam to climb on his back. "He's in his Speedos, I'm in a pair of shorts riding on Frankie Dettori's back topless along this beach for about 20 minutes, whipping his arse, whole beach cheering. He's very strong. Great core."

We settle in for another round. Liam is an early riser. He was up at 3.30am this morning, having hit the hay at around 8.30pm. He lives jet-lagged hours, so tucking enthusiastically into pints at noon feels closer to the end of the day for him than for most people.

Today, he's already been for a two-hour walk after making prolonged use of his now operational steam room. "My new thing is Deep Heat. Caked myself in it on the knees and hips, the calves, then into the steam room for as long as I could handle it. Went in a pensioner, came out Bruce Lee."

Tomorrow, their faithful Balkan driver Vlad is taking Liam and Debbie Gwyther (who's also here in the pub garden with her identical twin Katie) to visit his mother Peggy in Manchester. ➢

Sexy's back: Liam Gallagher, tonic and tulip, March 1, 2022.

Tom Oldham, Getty

◄ "I sometimes make prank calls to her," he says. "Put on a BBC voice, 'Hello, is this Margaret Gallagher? We're making a documentary for BBC1 about the mothers of Britain's greatest rock singers, we'd love you to appear.' For a second you can hear her thinking about it, getting her hair done and then, (*Irish matriarchal voice*) 'Oh Liam, you are some tulip!'"

When she's happy to hear from him she says, "Oh Liam, you are a real tonic." "And when I've wound her up she always calls me 'some tulip', her way of calling me a cunt, basically." He takes a Saint Paddy's Day gulp. "Miss her."

Until then, however, the afternoon stretches deliciously ahead of him. He orders another round to go with his double portion of Scotch eggs, slipping a glass of port into his Guinness "to change gears, without changing cars". In three hours, we'll move inside to stop our teeth chattering, before being asked to stop shouting so loudly. And in six hours, we'll all be outside again, as friends of friends join the gathering at dusk.

Before then, about four pints into the journey, Blur guitarist Graham Coxon arrives in the pub garden alongside the singer Rose Elinor Dougall. They've stopped by for a quiet leafy lunch.

"MY SON LENNON'S GOT A BAND. THEY'RE DOING THAT MATHEMATICAL ROCK. BLACK MIDI, THEY'RE INTO THAT. IT'S NOT FOR ME."

"All right!" shouts Liam happily, as Coxon passes. "How are you?" They hug. Coxon leans against the adjacent table to chat. "How's…" Liam searches for the correct word. "The band?"

"The band? I'm in a few bands, including with Rose."

"You know the band!" replies Liam. "The *band*. Don't make me say 'Blur'… Just messing. Do you want a drink?"

"I really would," says Coxon, eyeing up the table of empties ruefully. "But I'm on the wagon."

"Oh aye," agrees Liam. "I was on the wagon after Christmas to bring sexy back. How long you been on it for?"

"Six years."

"And that's why you look so goddamn sexy, Graham."

Graham Coxon offers a little bow and heads off to find a table.

"I always had time for Coxon," Liam says, after he leaves. "Great guitarist, nice man. Quite liked Blur. Beetlebum was a tune. With the singer [Damon Albarn], it was just because he's so competitive. It was never personal until it became personal."

LIAM'S BEST FRIEND IN MUSIC FROM THOSE BRITPOP glory days is probably The Verve's Richard Ashcroft. Whenever Liam's soused, he calls Ashcroft's phone and sings the latter's solo hit C'mon People (We're Making It Now) into his answering service, so eventually Ashcroft invited him over to his Richmond home between lockdowns to record a version for his acoustic album. "Like Lennon with Harry Nilsson," says Liam. "I'm Lennon, obviously."

Before leaving, Liam read that Richmond was London's Covid hotspot. "I'm vaxxed, but I respect that not everybody is," he says. "So I put on a full hazmat suit. Got out of the car. Rang the doorbell. Ashcroft opens it and doesn't blink. Walk into the kitchen and Kate, his missus, 'Fancy a tea, Liam?' Nobody mentioned the hazmat." Shakes his head. "Stoners."

On the way back across London, Liam told his driver that he fancied a Salted Caramel Twix. "Vlad stopped the car immediately and ran into a shop shouting (*east European accent*) 'My client NEEDS Salted Caramel Twix NOW!'" So every time he subsequently gets into Vlad's car there's always a new pile of Twix for him. "I only wanted one, once, but I feel guilty so I pocket them." Consequently, in his fridge, Liam has stacks of chilled Salted Caramel Twix bars.

As the clock strikes 8pm and actions begin to speak much louder than words as nobody is making any sense, thoughts turn to those sweet, crunchy, cold chocolate bars.

He might just go home, make a cuppa and crack open a Twix before bed. Then, at dawn, he'll lather himself in Deep Heat and trot down the garden to his steam room. After an hour of that followed by a long walk through his hangover on the Heath, he'll gather Debbie from her slumber before Vlad drives them up to Manchester, just in time to deliver a real tonic to Peggy. Another celebration beckons. Every day is Liam Gallagher's birthday, after all. Ⓜ

LIAM LOVERS #5

"HE IS UNDERRATED AS A SONGWRITER"

Death In Vegas's **RICHARD FEARLESS** on collaboration with a "really caring soul".

"When I first heard Liam I though he sounded like a cross between Lennon and Lydon. We asked him to be on the [2002 Death in Vegas single] Scorpio Rising. Sometimes when you get a song and you get someone in mind and you just know that they're the only person who can be on it.

He was amazing to work with. That song has quite a lot of lyrics in it and it's not the easiest one to just belt out, but we were just blown away by what he put into his performance and how much he was listening to how certain phrases should be. Later on, Death In Vegas ended up working on a record with Oasis for about five weeks that never kind of happened. At that time Liam was much more up for pushing their sound and being more experimental. To me, it seemed like he was the one who was up for taking that ship off course more. Towards the end we got given a batch of songs and as I recall, the ones I really liked were the ones Liam wrote. He is underrated as a songwriter.

I've got nothing but time for Liam. He's a funny fucker but he's also got a really caring soul, too. I love him."

MOJO FILTER

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

EDITED BY **JENNY BULLEY** jenny.bulley@bauermedia.co.uk

"When The Beatles enter his story, they are as much fodder as phenomenon."

DANNY ECCLESTON DOES THE POP, BOOKS PAGE 108

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Quality of Mersey

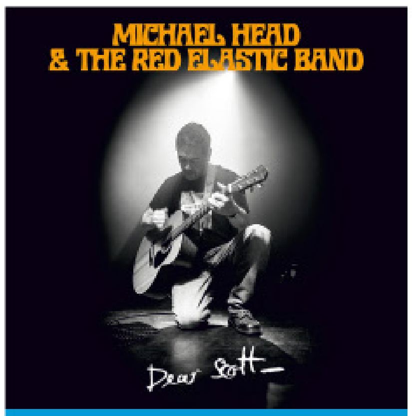
The Arthur Lee of Liverpool returns from the crossroads with the imaginary movie soundtrack to his life. By **Keith Cameron**. Illustration by **Vince McIndoe.**

Michael Head & The Red Elastic Band

★★★★★

Dear Scott

MODERN SKY. CD/DL/LP



"A beautifully balanced song sequence, the sound of a man reconnected."

IT'S A LONG way from Liverpool to Los Angeles, but Mick Head can get us there in the time it takes to play one of his tunes. He's been undertaking the 5,000-mile journey for almost 40 years, first with The Pale Fountains, then Shack, The Strands and, since 2013, as Michael Head & The Red Elastic Band. *Dear Scott* is the tenth album he's made with these various groups, different personnel lending distinct character, but Head the constant custodian: his golden acoustic-picking, uncanny melodies and chewy Scouse voice evoking a particularly Liverpudlian folk version of West Coast psychedelia across his songs' conversational views of precarious lives.

The route to this latest record seems typically tangled. In 2019, two years after the debut Red Elastic Band album *Adios Señor Pussycat* – Head's first LP in over a decade – there came a flurry of social media twittering about the next one. It was being produced by Bill Ryder-Jones at the ex-Coral guitarist's Wirral studio, it had a 12-song track-listing and it had a title, *New Brighton Rock*. In January 2020, Head went on tour, but had no new album. It was, he told interviewers, "two-thirds done", or "a work in progress", and he needed to "raise some cash" to complete the recording. Now, finally, the second Michael Head & The Red Elastic Band album is here, with a different 12-song track-listing (featuring four new songs), and a different title. "Circumstances happened," says the author, by way of explanation.

To say it's been worth the wait is an understatement worthy of Mick Head himself. Warm and intimate yet lush and expansive, *Dear Scott* is a bright light in a world full of shadows. Head sounds confident in his abilities and those of his latest band: guitarists Nathaniel Cummings and Danny Murphy, Danny's drummer brother Phil, bassist Tom Powell, all around half Mick's age. Massive credit must go to Ryder-Jones, who not only produces but plays, adding his quicksilver guitar and arrangement skills to Head's finest, most complete work since 1998's *The Magical World Of The Strands*. If *Adios…* had the air of a cupboard clear-out, this is a beautifully balanced song sequence, the sound of a man fully reconnected with his sense of purpose.

Jangling four-and-a-half minute opener Kismet affirms that planets have aligned. Always a good sign, Head nods to an old Shack song (Mood Of The Morning) and drops the first of many lyrical jewels: "Suddenly, I see the lights of your old man's Fiat Amigo". We're racing in the streets; twists and spills guaranteed. Grace And Eddie finds Mick "leavin' this old beaten up B&B/I'm goin' up that long, long, long crooked road." Amid Joe Meek melodrama ("Just pass the keys, I need to get less sober"), the narrator reveals who he's playing with nowadays: "Eddie put me on to this kid and he plays his own songs."

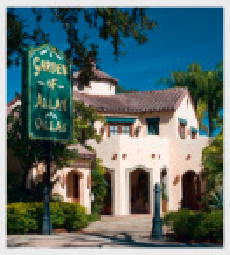
Now 38 but still a 'kid' in relative terms, Bill Ryder-Jones grew up listening intently to Head's work. Here he repays the debt in full. With its orchestral preludes, string codas and recurring motifs, *Dear Scott* plays out like a film soundtrack, fittingly given its title's provenance: the first two words of an unsent postcard-to-self from F Scott Fitzgerald, who went to Hollywood in the late '30s, skint and battling the booze, trying to write movies. "How are you?" Fitzgerald asked. "Have been meaning to come in and see you. I have living [sic] at the Garden Of Allah. Yours Scott Fitzgerald."

You don't have to squint too hard to imagine how Mick Head might empathise with a brilliant writer struggling to stay straight while living in LA's most decadent A-list hotel. He lays it all out in Fluke, a traipse down the "boulevards of fractured dreams" that oozes the seductive ambience of a Tom Collins by the pool followed by "Walt's" homes of the stars bus tour. "He'll show you where Pacino lives," Head murmurs, "and Ray Liotta fightin' with the neighbours' kids." With a phlegmy chuckle, Mick notes that the bus driver "looks a little bit like my Aunty Faye", before switching up into one of his signature Arthur Lee flourishes, then a return to the "mauve misty haze". Finally we're snapped back to mundane reality with a mobile phone drama. It's an aural film treatment, at once pin sharp and opaque.

Head's authorial perspective in songs ostensibly about other people has always been fascinatingly ambivalent. Trumpet-dappled The Next Day is a compact British class system vignette, where Captain Rose and Private York ("From different parts of the big house but the same cricket team") go to the Somme; only one comes back, and then not for long. The baroque Byrdsian hustle Gino And Rico has the literally killer opening line, "Bought her a gun for her birthday", then the entrance of Rico brings, "some errands, some body to hide"; think Springsteen's Meeting Across The River relocated via Crosby's Tribal Gathering to the streets of L6, or perhaps "a high rise in Kirkby", birthplace of American Kid's protagonist, a Hollywood nut whose favourite stars are "John Garfield and Ida Lupino… at the match you're quotin' parts."

Liverpool is the perennial backdrop to these sky-high low-life romances, but it gets top billing on The Ten, the album's chiming ascendant peak. Another bus ride, along the eponymous route that forms the spine of Head's city and his life in music: "Floating through Kenny, up past the icy and Yorkie's where we'd sing". Then "down Prescot Road, along Newsham Park" to the fruit and veg market, where Head's dad worked and Mick earned pocket money. Amid a bossa breakdown and strings, Love is in the air.

Ten albums in 40 years seems a slight return for so gifted a writer. Of course, there's always been a saga with Head: the tragic death of a Pale Fountains bandmate, the Shack album lost to a studio fire, the Strands masterpiece that took two opiated years to make then barely got released, the fallouts with producers and labels and management, the broken alliance with younger brother John, the years lost to drugs and drink – all feeding a sense of commercial injustice, albeit not for Michael Head, who simply rolls along the road to the next song. Luminous and alive, *Dear Scott* is just what Mick does: Head music, straight from the heart.

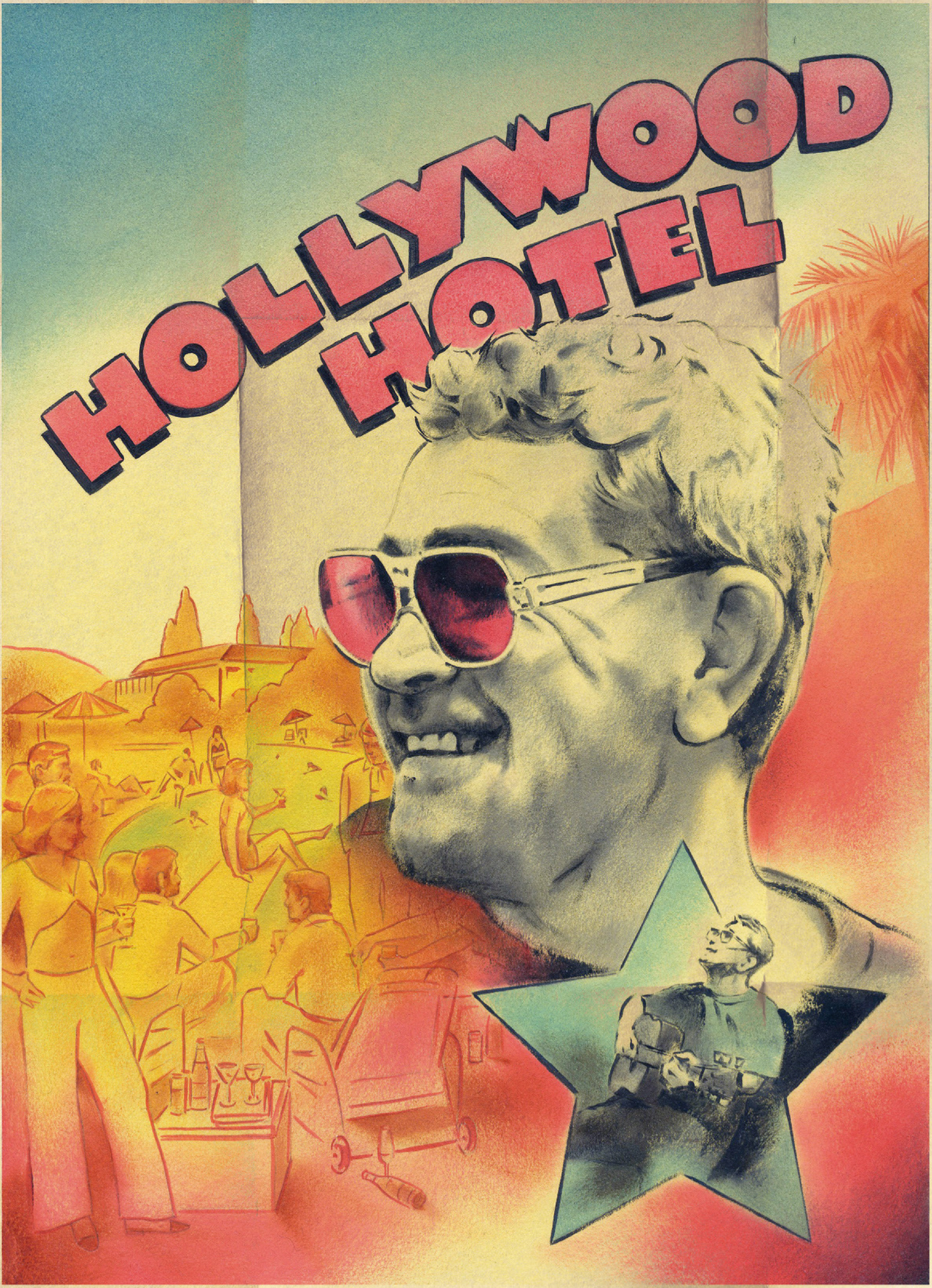


Alamy

BACK STORY: GARDEN OASIS

● *Dear Scott*'s working title was 'The Garden Of Allah', after the hotel at 8152 Sunset Blvd that was F Scott Fitzgerald's Hollywood abode from 1937-38 as he toiled as an MGM screenwriter and tried to stay sober. A collection of rental villas around a pool shaped like the Black Sea, the Garden was the creation of Russian actress Alla Nazimova, and became renowned as a discreet haven for screen stars – Greta Garbo, Errol Flynn, Clara Bow, Harpo Marx – to indulge their decadent whims. Fitzgerald died in 1940, while the Garden closed in 1959, usurped by the nearby Chateau Marmont. Today at 8152 Sunset Blvd stands a branch of McDonald's.

MICK SPEAKS! HEAD ON HOLLYWOOD, WRITING FACT AND FICTION, AND THE WONDER OF BILL.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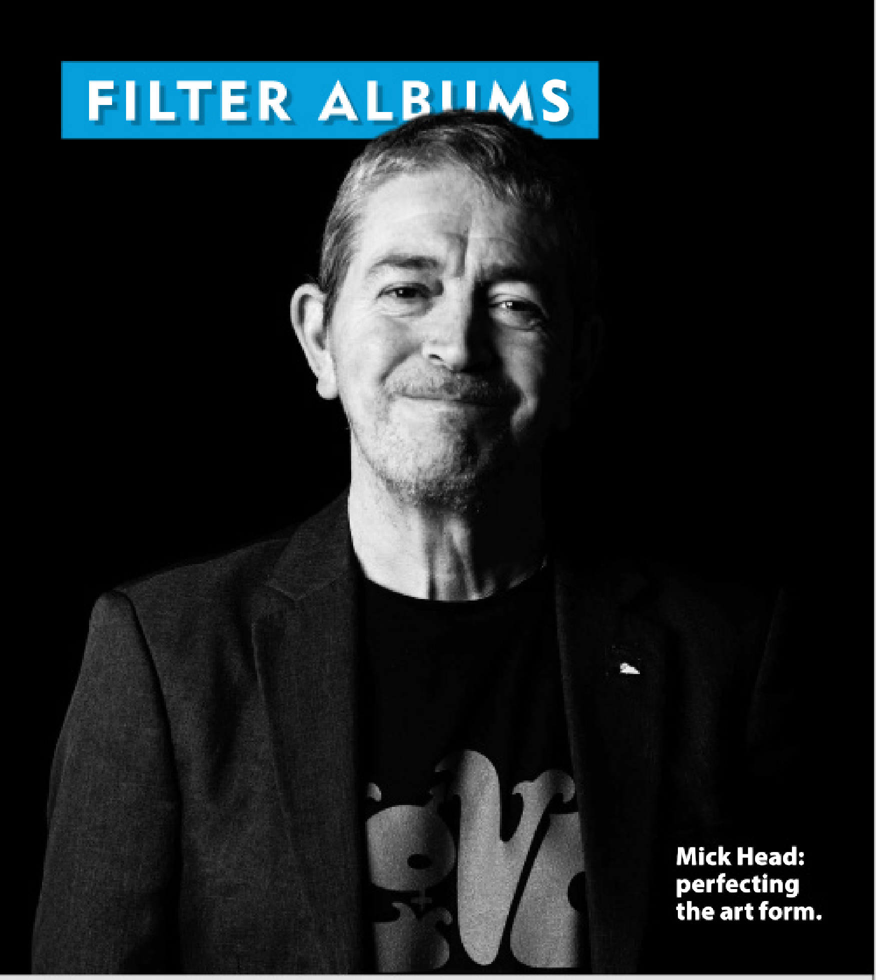


Mick Head: perfecting the art form.

"So debauched they threw Aldous Huxley out!"

Mick Head talks to Keith Cameron.

It's nearly five years since *Adiós Señor Pussycat*. How's the journey been?

"Up and down, personally, but songs were always getting written. We started getting some money together, with a view to going into Bill [Ryder-Jones]'s studio, and we were doing gigs. I was drinking… but we got six tracks down, and they sounded brilliant. Circumstances happened, shit happened in life, and then obviously, lockdown – I didn't see the lads in the band, we didn't even communicate. I was getting sober, kept writing. Then when we got back together 18 months later, I'd got sober, and because they're such beautiful, talented, grounded young men, it was like nothing had changed, everything clicked. Then we were going out to West Kirby to finish the album with Bill."

What's the resonance behind the LP title?

"About 15 years ago, a friend gave me the Pat Hobby short stories, and I hadn't really read any Scott Fitzgerald but I thought these are amazing. Then I got to know more about him as a person, and the documentary that Jay McInerney made was fascinating, because I was brought up on Hollywood black and white movies. Scott was king of the Jazz Age and he wanted to crack this new medium, because his friends like Faulkner and James Agee were getting movie credits. The poignancy of when he writes these postcards to himself says a lot about his frame of mind. Scott was sober when he was in Hollywood and there was a lot of excess around him. Some of his letters to his publishers, he's so honest. That drew me to him."

Trying to stay sober and work while surrounded by misbehaviour – could you relate to that?

"Yeah, completely. Unfortunately, he didn't take long to come off the wagon. The Garden Of Allah hotel is fascinating in itself. The debauchery was so heavy that they even threw Aldous Huxley out, which is saying something!"

What kind of producer is Bill Ryder-Jones?

"Well, he's a beautiful person. Just so lovely. Laid-back, grounded. And then you get *Bill* – his playing, his *guitar*-playing, his piano-playing, his ideas for orchestration. He was so in tune with where the songs needed to go. You can't ask for more than that."

A lot of your songs are ostensibly character studies – are you in there too?

"Fluke is about a girl who works in PR, sitting on the toilet at the airport debating whether to put her phone down the grid outside so she can get on the plane. Whereas, Streets Of Kenny, I wrote that on the spot, about me. So I do write fact and fiction. Songwriting's an art form – you're cramming a short story into three minutes 50. I think that's why I've naturally evolved into writing short stories. Which I'm enjoying at the moment, a publisher asked me last year to do a book. It was good, finishing the album and having something else to do, because I do love writing. And cycling! Clears your head and your soul."

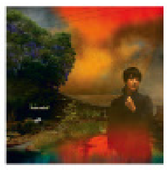
Sharon Van Etten

★★★

We've Been Going About This All Wrong

JAGJAGUWAR. CD/DL/LP

SVE's sixth: "A story of hope, loss, longing and resilience."



For all its intimacy, Van Etten's spare, inward-looking sixth LP is not without the kind of epic grandeur that made her 2019 single Seventeen a new drive-time staple. But while opener Darkness Fades soon goes full Springsteen and the chorus of Anything seems built to transmit to arena block ZZ, there's a compelling claustrophobia to the scuffed-up beats and minimalist piano of Home To Me and Born, somewhat raw companion pieces in which Van Etten muses upon motherhood's challenges and what we can and can't control. Designed for old-school, sequential consumption as a whole (no stand-alone tracks will precede the album's release), *WBGATAW* was largely made at Van Etten's new home studio, Invert. It builds a new stoic eloquence into her vulnerability, even if the stark, birdsong-imbued Darkish drips with Radiohead-like ennui.

James McNair

King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard

★★★

Omnium Gatherum

KGLW. CD/DL

Australian prog-psych rockers' panoramic-sounding 'lockdown' album.

Melbourne's King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard are nothing if not hard-working, notching up 20 studio albums in half as many years. *Omnium Gatherum*'s 15 tracks encompass trippy prog-folk and furball-in-the-throat heavy metal and all points in between. In doing so, it doubles as a primer for KGLW's past work; albums that zigzag from New-Age trance one year to detuned guitars the next. This latest work's centrepiece, though, is the 18-minute The Dripping Tap, with its echoes of '70s Hawkwind and Gong's Radio Gnome Invisible trilogy. Here, the chorus becomes a meditative chant over chuntering guitars and metronomic drums. The rest can't quite compete, and is at its best on the contrasting Magenta Mountain and Presumptuous, with its whispery Traffic soundalike flute. If the thrashing Gaia and Predator X feel like unwelcome intrusions, there's always something gentler three or four minutes away. Unpredictably good fun.

Mark Blake

The Black Keys

★★★

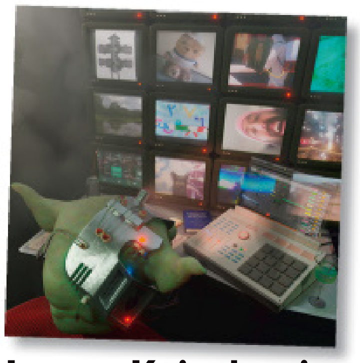
Dropout Boogie

NONESUCH. CD/DL/LP

Hit-and-miss eleventh LP, 20 years after *The Big Come Up*.

If The Black Keys have often had the air of a marriage of convenience – Dan Auerbach and Patrick Carney admit they're more work colleagues than big buddies – then there's been an evident staleness since the two rebonded in 2019 after a four-year break. *Dropout Boogie* shakes up their studio process by bringing in Greg Cartwright of Reigning Sound and even Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top, and if Free-like opener Wild Child promises much, then it soon becomes clear that The Black Keys' spark remains intermittent. At its worst, Your Team Is Looking Good returns Auerbach to his high school jock past in a chant song that might not earn itself the ubiquity it seeks. The melodies and fire return in Baby I'm Coming Home, but held up against their past triumphs, *Dropout Boogie* often sounds half-cooked.

Tom Doyle



James Krivchenia

★★★★

Blood Karaoke

4AD. DL/LP

Big Thief drummer and Taylor Swift collaborator's fourth solo album.

Sounding very much unlike either Big Thief's inspired indie-folk or Taylor Swift's self-penned, world-conquering pop, Jim Krivchenia's solo work takes from seemingly everyone, but sounds like no one else. A collection of instrumentals built around hundreds of randomly generated samples of YouTube videos and some of Krivchenia's own MIDI work, *Blood Karaoke* ought to be an incoherent mess. Instead, it's a sometimes beautiful, sometimes brutal sound collage, with unexpected twists and turns every few seconds, such as the elegiac piano which appears from nowhere on Caldendrical Rot, the briefly swinging guitars of Sub-Creational Reality and the opening to Scaleable Future Self Continuity Interventions, which promises Thriller before the song delivers a clatter worthy of Aphex Twin. It's a breathless sensory onslaught, but a few plays in, moments begin to stick, although the element of surprise never falters. There is, it seems safe to say, nothing quite like it.

John Aizlewood

Tomberlin

★★★★

I Don't Know Who Needs To Hear This…

SADDLE CREEK. CD/DL/LP

Second LP from Brooklyn-based singer-songwriter transmits louder and clearer.

"After the party I walked home /Alone," sings Sarah Beth Tomberlin on Stoned, catching the melancholy mood that winds around the feet of her second album. If 2018's fragile debut *At Weddings* tended to become lost in the beautifully abstract mists as the pastor's daughter explored faith and its losses, *I Don't Know Who Needs To Hear This…* navigates using sharper corners and edges. The relentless Happy Accident, featuring Cass McCombs, is held in shape by a needling guitar motif; Tap's percussive patter raises bruises behind Tomberlin's silver-thread voice. Gentle Cassandra Jenkins-like blurs of saxophone and clarinet help suggest missed connections but the album ends with a revealing moment of parallel play as Felix Walworth of Brooklyn's Told Slant joins Tomberlin for lullabying call-and-response Idkwntht: "This song is simple/But it ain't easy".

Victoria Segal

King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard: scaling heights.

Oumou Sangaré: opening up new spaces in her sound.

Electric Maryland

Ninth album from the Wassoulou soul singer finds her in the US, looking back to her roots. By David Hutcheon.

Oumou Sangaré

★★★★

Timbuktu

OUMSANG/WORLD CIRCUIT. CD/DL/LP

IT DOESN'T seem so long ago that unexpected moves by artists who weren't in the first flush of youth were seen as desperate, self-harming attacks on their own credibility. "How do you do, fellow kids?" Ask David Bowie. Today, most MOJO readers would probably agree that your sixth decade is exactly the time to throw caution to the wind, learn new tricks and go a bit wild. There's little to be lost by attempting career suicide.

It's a mantra that appears to suit Oumou Sangaré: having spent 20 years building steadily on the success of her 1989 debut, *Moussolou*, West Africa's queen of soul took an eight-year break from recording before delivering 2017's *Mogoya*, her electro album, at 49. After a brief pause, she issued *Acoustic*, much the same album but without the effects, as if to reassure the faithful. A promotional tour of the US followed, just as Covid-19 was raising its head, and rather than go home to Mali, she settled down in Maryland and fell in love with Baltimore, the Bamako – who knew? – of the eastern seaboard.

Locked down in a country she didn't know particularly well, absorbing American culture close-up, and writing songs while separated from family and friends… put it all together, and it's almost not a surprise that *Timbuktu* is her blues album. If that American music has its origins in the string-bending minstrels of the north of Mali, in Wassoulou (Sangaré's home region) they play their notes straight, but funky. Just as Ali Farka Touré found a second wind collaborating with Ry Cooder, Sangaré has opened up new spaces in her customary sound, into which fit dobro and slide guitar (courtesy of co-producer Pascal Danaë), right next to the kamele ngoni of Mamadou Sidibé.

Lyrically, she definitely feels the blues: Sira considers the delinquency of those from decent backgrounds ("The baobab tree's trunk is smooth, but its fruits are rough"); Gniani Sara tackles the slings and arrows of being a woman in a man's world ("One day, insults and bullying will be but a bad memory"); and Kêlê Magni rewrites Edwin Starr to powerful effect ("War has never built anything, it destroys all it finds"). Occasionally, admittedly, not understanding the words has its advantages: opener Wassulu Don is a magnificent slab of burning hot funk – very Black Keys – in praise of investment in schools, health centres and hotels.

What you don't know won't hurt you, though. If you've never sampled Oumou Sangaré before, *Timbuktu* is the perfect entrée, the one you won't need to feel your way into. Without making concessions, she's delivered her most accessible album yet, perhaps even her best. Where she goes next is anyone's guess.

Arcade Fire: moving forwards again.

Reload/Refresh

A dread and wonder-filled sixth sets the Canadian group back on track. By Tom Doyle.

Arcade Fire

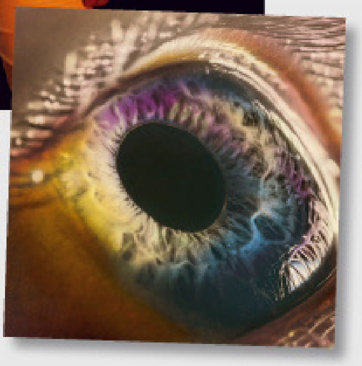
★★★★

WE

COLUMBIA. CD/DL/LP

ARCADE FIRE'S transformation from post-apocalyptic choir to glittery disco revue may have been a startling one, but their quality control was lost along the way. If 2013's *Reflektor* was patchy, then 2017's *Everything Now*, with its ABBA moves and clunky word play – see Infinite Content's "we're infinitely content" – was distinctly ho-hum.

Five years later, on *WE*, with its pristine sonics polished by Nigel Godrich in cahoots with husband-and-wife bandleaders Win Butler and Régine Chassagne, the Montreal-formed quintet are tapping back into what made them great in the first place. It's there amid opener Age Of Anxiety I's dynamic shift from throbbing tension and percussive panic attack breaths into an '83 Eurythmics synth pulse and hands-in-the-air crescendo, or with the tempo-change headrush – built for live thrills – halfway through The Lightning I, II.



End Of Days vibes abounded in their first three albums, be it the feral kids of Neighborhood #1 (Tunnels) or the bombs dropping on residential areas in The Suburbs. Now, our edgy times may well have caught up with Arcade Fire's dark predictions and here there are visions of "tyres burning on Rodeo Drive" and "the sky breaking open". The social media commentary is smarter, as in the haunting coda of Age Of Anxiety I where Butler's lines, "It's all about you"/"It's not about you", blur into one another.

The dance music elements on *WE* suit them better too. The New Order moves of Age Of Anxiety II (Rabbit Hole) are precision-tooled, and if its main hook ("Rabbit Hole/Yeah/Plastic soul/Yeah") sounds at first too simple and daft a sentiment, then repeat plays turn it into a maddeningly catchy earworm. The only misstep is the Chassagne-fronted Human League-ish disco pop of Unconditional II (Race And Religion), an *Everything Now* hangover that even a surprise Peter Gabriel vocal cameo (just as underplayed as Bowie's appearance on Reflektor) can't enliven.

The big statement standout, meanwhile, is the nine-minute End Of The Empire I-IV, which aims at *Aladdin Sane* and makes a direct hit. Opening with barroom piano, 12-string acoustic guitar and tears brimming in Butler's eyes as he watches "the moon on the ocean/ Where California used to be", it moves, guided by stirring orchestration, through Mick Ronson sustained guitar notes, Woody Woodmansey rapid-fire snare fills and fluttering saxophone to a defiant, "I am Spartacus"-styled "I unsubscribe/She unsubscribes" rejection of the information age. As a distillation of everything Arcade Fire are about, it's utterly brilliant. Moreover, the Bowie homage is reinforced on the album artwork – an imagining of supermassive black hole Sagittarius A* as the pupil in a human eye, hand-tinted by *Hunky Dory/...Ziggy...* airbrush artist Terry Pastor.

This tight, seven-track, 40-minute-long record ends on a note of something approximating hope, with its lovely acoustic-folk title track (echoing Led Zeppelin's Tangerine) and 'imagine no possessions' sentiment. Ultimately, then, *WE* is Arcade Fire's best album since 2010's *The Suburbs*. By circling back, they're once again moving forward.

Claire Rousay

★★★★

Everything Perfect Is Already Here

SHELTER-PRESS. CD/DL/LP

Snippets of life and tranquil melody help celebrate everyday pleasures.

The work of San Antonio-based experimental artist Claire Rousay is stitched together from a variety of sources – field recordings, ambient synths, gossamer-light orchestration, and snatches of conversation – with great dexterity and imbued with a comforting, familiar glow. Across a brace of super-sized movements (mere 'tracks' does them a disservice), Rousay unfurls a vignette of her life, her ever-present Zoom H5 recorder playing a leading role. Briefly, in the distance you'll hear the metronomic beep-beep of a truck reversing. There's the crackle of a log fire – or could it be something as prosaic as the rustling of a bag – then in drifts muted harp or a gorgeous string melody. *Everything Perfect Is Already Here* avoids emotional overload, instead offering solace and a loving embrace, a haven of calm and normality.

Stephen Worthy

Jennylee

★★★

Heart Tax

JENNYS RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

Warpaint bassist's second solo salvo of dark, seductively downbeat pop.

Though six of its tracks were originally released as standalone singles, Warpaint bassist/singer Jenny Lee Lindberg's second full-length holds together as a coherent statement, offering – like its predecessor, 2015's *Right On!* – a more modest, bare-bones vision of the spectral, goth-adjacent dark pop of her day job. This spare production gives more space for the songs' subtle charms to shine – the Peter Hook-esque basslines guiding the electronic melancholia of Tickles, the electric piano underpinning the brooding title track. *Heart Tax*'s abiding overcast mood ensures that its moments of brightness – the beguiling indie-pop of the intermittently hopeful Newtopia, the lulling acoustic strum of In Awe Of – offer precious relief, though the album's most majestic stroke is also its bleakest, the closing I'm So Tired a slow and deliciously sad exeunt at funereal pace, its lissom guitars picking out the bitterest and most sweet melodies.

Stevie Chick

Lola Kirke

★★

Lady For Sale

THIRD MAN. CD/DL/LP

Have you been waiting for '80s-inspired country disco?

A rather odd second offering from British/American actress/musician Lola Kirke (daughter of Free drummer Simon Kirke). On one hand, there are well written songs here, served up on a bed of country tunes via Jack White's rarefied, obsessively aesthetic Third Man label. But then there's the cheap, digitised sound, with all the charm of a Hallmark Country Christmas album dropping an '80s home organ down the stairs at Nashville airport. The weird thing is that Kirke's stated intention is to fuse country and disco into a party no one would want to miss, so it's *supposed* to sound the way it does. Admittedly, new genres are created by introducing styles that have never previously crossed paths, but sometimes they should be kept locked in their own dressing rooms for fear they'll be a bad influence on each other.

Andy Fyfe

The Waterboys

★★★★

All Souls Hill

COOKING VINYL. CD/DL/LP

The ever-prolific Mike Scott returns to peak creativity.

There's been a playfulness and openness to latter-day Waterboys records that comes into full bloom on *All Souls Hill*, not least since six of its nine tracks involve a collaboration with former Paul Weller co-writer/producer Simon Dine. The Southern Moon sails a beautifully wistful melody over heavy soul beats and In My Dreams reveals Mike Scott's nocturnal anxieties ("Playing a concert with no equipment/Or making a record with no songs"). That's not to say that Scott's inherent spirituality is missing (see the mythical title track), but there's a mood of creative freedom best illustrated by his tweaking of the lyric of Once Were Brothers, Robbie Robertson's moving 2019 lament for The Band (done with Robertson's consent). Altogether, it makes for a multi-faceted and in turns amusing and affecting album.

Tom Doyle

Michael Marcelle

still Young And Stupid (the opening track), others a reflection of how his Christian beliefs embrace the tenets of Buddhism.

Martin Aston

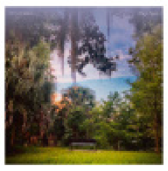
50 Foot Wave

★★★

Black Pearl

FIRE. CD/DL/LP

The first sighting in six years of Kristin Hersh's on-off 'other band'.



While Kristin Hersh's solo or Throwing Muses work has invariably been her major priority, for two decades her three-piece 50 Foot Wave have lurked in the background, a safe, if only occasionally-visited harbour. Preferring EPs to LPs, the seven tracks on *Black Pearl* (titled after the New Orleans district where it was recorded) total just over 30 minutes, but only a fool prefers quantity to quality and Hersh is on sterling form here. The formula remains unchanged: fellow Throwing Muse Bernard Georges pumping out hypnotic, dubby basslines, most floorquakingly on the fearsome Blush, while Rob Ahlers hits his drums with Bill Ward-esque power. Above them Hersh adds guitar intricacy and her trademark dislocated vocals. At its best, it harkens to long-lost, dense-sounding riff grinders such as Breaking Circus or Earth, but there's light as well as shade too and Broken Sugar positively twinkles.

John Aizlewood

Belle & Sebastian

★★★★

A Bit Of Previous

MATADOR. CD/DL/LP

Back to Glasgow for septet's first non-soundtrack album since 2015.

Covid scuppered plans to record *A Bit Of Previous* in LA. So, for the first time in over 20 years, they stayed home and, coincidentally or not, made their best record in over 20 years. The album title suggests a back-to-basics affair, though only the exquisite Do It For Your Country could fit snugly on 1996 debut *Tigermilk*, as the remainder affirms their more recent, diverse ambitions: blue-eyed soul-gospel (If They're Shooting At You), girl-group melodrama (A World Without You), '70s rock (Unnecessary Drama rides a harmonica with a thrilling momentum) and other retro curios (Deathbed Of My Dreams visits Lee Hazlewood country). Throughout, frontman Stuart Murdoch's succinct dramas are typically populated by vulnerable dreamers and seekers, some

Congotronics International

★★★★

Where's The One?

CRAMMED. CD/DL/LP

A decade on, the fabled Congotronics vs Rockers band finally sealed on wax.

Featuring Juana Molina, Deerhoof, Wildbirds & Peacedrums and Skeletons' Matt Mehlan, plus Konono No.1 and Kasai Allstars, the 2011 concerts by this orchestra of 19 – a spin-off from the *Tradi-Mods vs Rockers* compilation – were a joyous exploration of possibility; just about the only thing they couldn't do, it turned out, was be in the same place long enough to complete an album. Culled from shows and rehearsals, and edited into shape in 2021, gig highlights are re-imagined – Deerhoof's Super Duper Rescue Allstars and Wildbirds' Doubt/Hope are beefed up with distorted thumb piano reverb and extra percussion; the Congolese bolster their proto-Sister Ray groove with electronics and feedback (Kule Kule Redux a reminder of how intense and experimental the shows were). If you've been waiting 11 years for this, you'll be relieved to know it won't disappoint. Now get back on the road, gang.

David Hutcheon

Leyla McCalla

★★★★

Breaking The Thermometer

ANTI-. CD/DL/LP

Inspired by Haitian insurgence, a cellist finds a rebellious new folk.

A former Carolina Chocolate Drop and a current member of roots supergroup Our Native Daughters, Haitian-American songwriter Leyla McCalla has made a series of intriguing solo albums that express her intertwined origins – pizzicato cello ballads set to Langston Hughes poetry, buttery soul gnawed by noise-rock guitar, sly banjo jingles betraying her past as a New Orleans busker. Her fourth, *Breaking The Thermometer*, funnels those disparate means into a unified end. Prompted by a university commission, McCalla plundered the archives of Radio Haiti, the proud and politically fraught island nation's first independent signal, to emerge with a complex sequence of Creole folk songs, *musique concrète* collages, and metaphysical pop tunes about identity and memory. Though the project is steeped in timely questions of democracy and righteousness, McCalla supplies an unexpected tenderness even to songs about political prisoners. An exquisite distillation of hope and perseverance, mystery and humanity.

Grayson Haver Currin

Sunflower Bean

★★★

Headful Of Sugar

LUCKY NUMBER. CD/DL/LP

Stand-out young NYC alt-rockers *volte-face* into '80s pop froth.

With 2018's *Twentytwo In Blue*, this New York-based trio co-fronted by 'Hedi Slimane muse' Julia Cumming emerged as a rare young combo that classic-rock oldsters could approve of, spurning their generation's '80s synth-pop influences for precociously cynical guitar-bass-drums assaults on Trumpian 'late capitalism'. Four years on, their third outing marks a policy U-turn: *Headful Of Sugar*, as per title, gleefully syncs with their peers' saccharine sonics, and thematically embraces "fast pleasures… the joy that comes with letting go of everything you thought mattered." But it's not all bad. On transformative anthem Who Put You Up To This?, Cumming staggeringly trills through stratospheric registers like prime-time Elizabeth Fraser, while Otherside, with its resonant piano chords and jarringly martial snare beat, clearly channels Kate Bush's *Hounds Of Love*. Side two, however, veers into arch Euro-pop (I Don't Have Control Sometimes) and moody balladry (Stand By Me), and Sunflower Bean's new-found confection begins to set one's teeth on edge.

Andrew Perry

Cleveland Watkiss

★★★

The Great Jamaican Songbook Vol. 1

CDUBYA MUSIC. CD/DL

Reggae standards with playful jazz inflections.

On *The Great Jamaican Songbook Vol. 1*, multifaceted vocalist and former Jazz Warrior Cleveland Watkiss reconnects with his reggae roots, reworking archetypal tracks by such revered crooners as Gregory Isaacs, Dennis Brown and Delroy Wilson, the loose jazz-influenced backing spurring a blurring of the boundaries in renditions that are refreshingly free from tight strictures. Recorded at Zak Starkey's studio in Ocho Rios with keyboardist Phil Ramacon, guitarist Alan Weeks and saxophonist Ray Carless, the *Songbook*'s non-standard approach sees Watkiss adding plenty of bite to Gregory's If I Don't Have You, Prince Lincoln's Humanity, Burning Spear's Red, Gold And Green, and Delroy's What Is Man (the latter complete with a frisky toasting section). And although a lacklustre take on Night Nurse comes across as a detraction, the offbeat versions of Junior Byles' Curly Locks and Bobby Melody's Joy In The Morning make for smoother sailing.

David Katz

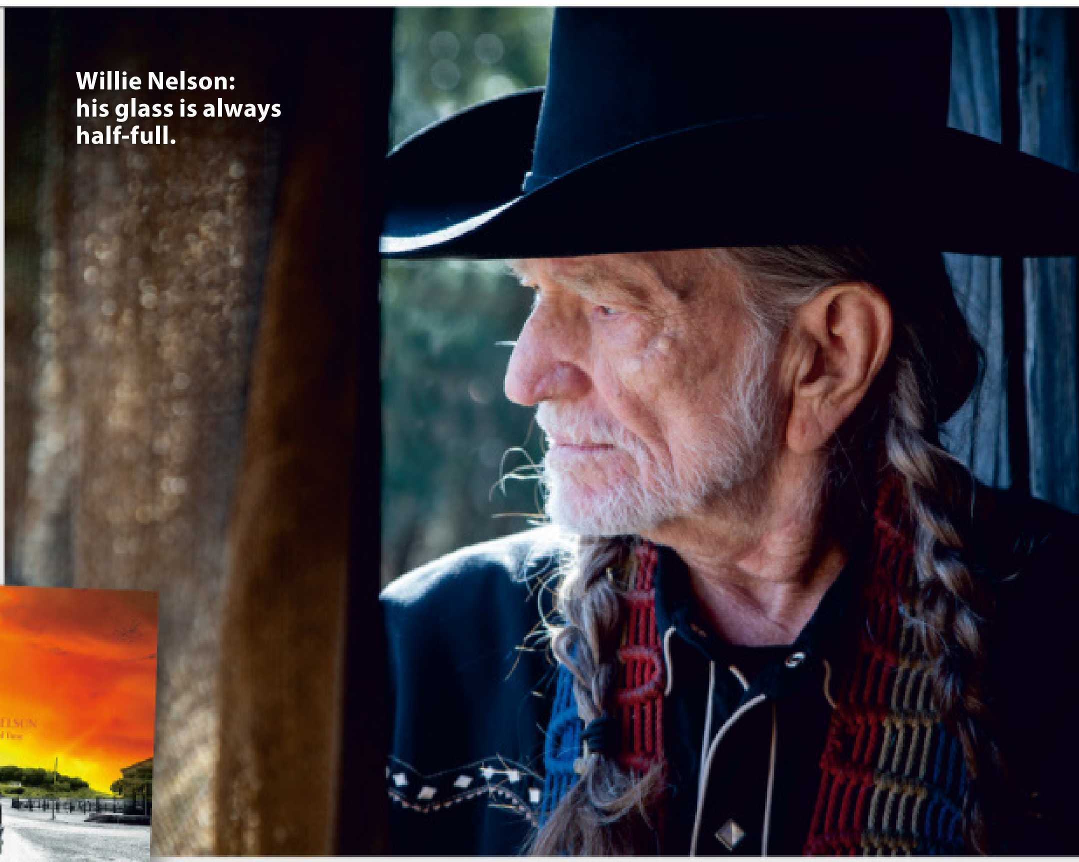
Willie Nelson

★★★★

A Beautiful Time

SONY LEGACY. CD/DL/LP

His 71st solo original album, released on his 89th birthday.



Willie Nelson: his glass is always half-full.

JUST SINCE signing with Legacy in 2012 Willie Nelson has sold over 1 million albums, and his last three of largely original material, from 2018's *Last Man Standing*, stack up against most records from his '70s purple patch. Many of these originals, as always co-written with Buddy Cannon, abstractly look back on Nelson's legacy from the far side of 80. It comes in three distinct types: the front porch wisdom of Dusty Bottles ("Memories are made to sip and savour/ And dusty bottles pour a finer glass of wine"); looking forward to big ol' pickin' parties with fallen comrades, "Waylon, John and Kris, and our sweetheart Patsy Cline"; and the Sturgill Simpson-like cosmic philosophising of Energy Follows Thought. Alongside covers of Leonard Cohen's Tower Of Song and The Beatles' With A Little Help From My Friends, it's another later-life triumph.

Andy Fyfe

Pamela Springsteen

FILTER ALBUMS

Fringe benefits: Kevin Morby reflects on what time gives and takes away.

You've been framed

Seventh LP from Mr Waxahatchee sees life flicker by in a series of exposures. By Danny Eccleston.

Kevin Morby

★★★★

This Is A Photograph

DEAD OCEANS. CD/DL/LP

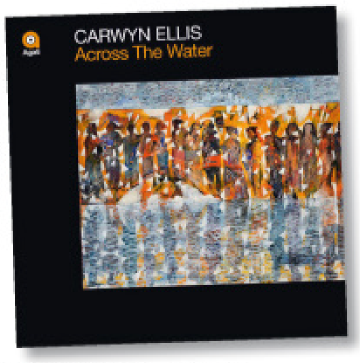
BUDDY HOLLY, Terry Allen, Bobby Keys, The Legendary Stardust Cowboy… when they make 'em, in Lubbock Texas, they break the mould, or else, mislay it somewhere. Kevin Morby is in that lineage of one-offs – a singer-songwriter with a chewy, conversational voice whose albums range from velvety baroque pop (2016's *Singing Saw*) to spectral campfire Leonard Cohen (cf. his last studio album, 2020's *Sundowner*). If you're not a fan, however, it's possible you've thought him a tad affected, with songs like Piss River, from 2019's *Oh My God*, that rhyme "castle" with "asshole". And yet, when he pares down to the simplest statements, he can unlock a childlike directness.

This Is A Photograph also begins with a child's eye view – the opening title track is inspired by a box of snaps Morby leafed through at his parents' house on a day his father collapsed and was rushed to hospital – but this is an adult child, reflecting on what time gives and takes away, Morby's ever-trebly guitar almost kora-like against a tumbling, West African-ish rhythm.

It's typical, as it turns out, of a record that feels warmer, wiser and less forced than any of his albums so far, with Morby the singer finding a more relaxed delivery and Morby the writer looking out rather than in, searching for glimmers of light in a darkened world – like the sunrise he describes in the mantric, heart-swelling A Random Act Of Kindness ("Sun came up, with no plan") – or accessing the stories of others whose lives, or deaths, he intersects.

The brevity of the human span is everywhere – in the time that slips by in banjo-driven Bittersweet, TN ("The living took forever but the dying went quick") and in the ghostly presence of tragic Jeff Buckley in Disappearing, where Morby begs that we "please don't go swimming in the Mississippi river", before advising "Take off your jacket, and take off your boots". Buckley's there, too, in the sweet aching swoon of A Coat Of Butterflies, serenaded by Brandee Younger's harp and caressed, in a surprise one-song cameo, by jazz drummer Makaya McCraven's languid brushes. "Hey man, have you heard Buckley singing Hallelujah?" Morby asks, while his song reflects that there might be such a thing, after all, as immortality.

That makes the record sound draggy, but it's not. Rock Bottom's fuzzy glam *literally* laughs at life's black comedy, and Stop Before I Cry is a transporting paean to Morby's partner Katie Crutchfield, AKA Waxahatchee ("I know that you got secrets, and you know I got them too"), that's clear about what makes life worth living. Several times, he turns to boxing for a metaphor. "Put some gloves on me," he sings, and he'll duke it out with time before, like Roberto Durán in that famous second fight with Sugar Ray Leonard, he says 'No más' – 'no more'. Until then, he'll be in there dancing, swinging.



Carwyn Ellis

★★★

Across The Water

AGATI. CD/DL

Prolific Welshman's stripped-down first solo LP.

A world away from Carwyn Ellis's Latin-tinged work with – amongst so many others –Rio 18, the more psychedelic Colorama or as a touring Pretender, *Across The Water* is a simple affair, albeit with complex subject matter. Overwhelmingly just Ellis's croon and his piano – in four cases, most evocatively The Boy On The Beach, it's just piano – it's an understated tribute to refugees and the journeys they take, particularly on the treacherous slog from north Africa to southern Europe. Along the way, there's joy of sorts on the beautiful Thank God (as in "thank god I'm alive"), but quiet anger on Seventy Four ("74 bodies all in a line…") and dislocated rue on the cover of fellow Welshman The Gentle Good's Bound For Lampedusa. A change of pace would have been a boon, but, as it stands, *Across The Water* is a document of our times.

John Aizlewood

King Garbage

★★★★

Heavy Metal Greasy Love

IPECAC. CD/DL/LP

Eccentric soul contortions from moonlighting R&B production whizzes.

Grammy-winning producer/songwriters whose clientele include The Weeknd, Sia and Leon Bridges, Zach Cooper and Vic Dimotsis's work as King Garbage takes a more maverick path. Their second album, *Heavy Metal Greasy Love*, eschews the exacting, ersatz approach of soul revivalists like the Dap-tones for something lo-fi and visionary, and using the studio as a tool for unlikely alchemy. Each track crackles with ludic inspiration, from the seamy, distorted brass scoring Let 'Em Talk, to the itchy rhythms, bristling woodwind and man-handled pianos of Snow, to Never Die, a stark showcase for Cooper's eloquent octave guitar. Meanwhile, Dimotsis's vocals – multi-tracked, wilfully layered and purposefully miked too close and too hot – evoke D'Angelo, Daryl Hall and Tom Waits, occasionally on the same track. Twisting the familiar into the idiosyncratic, King Garbage's mutant strains of deep soul and murky funk are an unexpected treat.

Stevie Chick

Large Plants

★★★

The Carrier

GHOST BOX. CD/DL/LP

Late-'60s heavy-psych vibes from Wolf People side-project.

First came Paul Weller in 2020, now comes Jack Sharp of Wolf People's new project to Ghost Box: the record label that through analogue electronics, folk and psychedelia mines the eerier sides of sepia-tinted nostalgia. *The Carrier* comes across like a late-'60s soundtrack to an underground biker film that occasionally veers towards horror – Uneasy Rider, perhaps? – with every overdriven guitar riff, meaty drum roll and West Coast harmony recorded by Sharp on his own in 2020's Covid summer (Deerhoof's Chris Cohen then mixed it last year). It's largely great fun, its combination of heavy rock and Californian sunshine working best in the chase-scene vibes of No Difference and Don't Let Me Down. Softer songs like Marceline and Hold Onto also charm, but float away after a while, as does the smoke of certain herbs when exhaled.

Jude Rogers

Warpaint

★★★★

Radiate Like This

HEIRLOOMS/VIRGIN. CD/DL/LP

West Coast art-rockers return with sublime set of insular Californian gothic.

The six years since Warpaint's groove-embracing third LP have been frenetic: solo albums, side-projects, forays into parenthood and acting. And when the group finally found time to work on a follow-up, Covid forced them out of the studio to complete the record remotely. Perhaps this explains the resolutely interior vibe of *Radiate Like This*, a marked contrast from its predecessor's bold crossover moves. But the muted tenor of its production, combined with some of their simplest, sparest songs, yield Warpaint's finest album so far. The subterranean funk isn't entirely absent – Altar writhes with complex, playful polyrhythms, Hips rolls to a menacing shuffle. But the album's true charms – the ethereal, harmony-soaked pleasures of Melting and Trouble, the bleak synth-pop of Hard To Tell You, the sitar-edged tangle of Send Nudes – conjure a curtains-closed, Californian gothic aesthetic that mark *Radiate Like This* as a downbeat triumph.

Stevie Chick

Chantal Anderson

Ann Wilson

★★★

Fierce Bliss

SILVER LININGS MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

Heart's powerhouse vocalist enlists Vince Gill and covers Jeff Buckley on solo set.

There's a moment on the soundtrack to Singles – Cameron Crowe's film set around the Seattle grunge scene – when a jangling dulcimer intro heralds a female baritone. It's Heart's Wilson sisters doing a cover of Led Zeppelin's Battle Of Evermore and it's a stand-out. Crowe made the case for Heart being cornerstones of the Seattle – and by extension grunge – scene and it's not a completely mad theory: the Wilsons' belief in the primacy of folk rock was even evident in their fright-wig era. Singer Ann's third solo LP is her most Heart-like, cruising between drivetime and blues-rock. Her voice has aged wonderfully: the cracks and lowered register give ballast to material like Gladiator and Jeff Buckley's Forget Her. A star is deducted for a cover of Eurythmics' Missionary Man though, which sounds like karaoke night down at the Wig & Pen.

Priya Elan

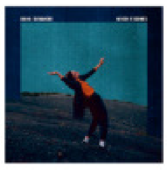
Dana Gavanski

★★★

When It Comes

FULL TIME HOBBY. CD/DL/LP/MC

Ethereal second album from Canadian-Serb singer-songwriter.



When It Comes drifts like twigs in a stream; its meditative atmosphere sounds as if Jane Weaver were fusing France's Emmanuelle Parrenin with mid-period Stereolab at their most reflective. Indigo Highway, the sole up-tempo song, suggests a familiarity with Gallic '80s electro-pop duo Elli & Jacno yet filters this through a folk-informed perspective. Last year, Dana Gavanski followed up her debut album *Yesterday Is Gone* with Wind Songs – a covers EP including King Crimson's I Talk To The Wind, Macedonian folk staple Jano Mome and songs by Chic, Tim Hardin and Judee Sill. Such magpie-mindedness may reflect her roots: being of Serbian extraction, having lived in Canada and a subsequent relocation to London. Now, there's a cohesiveness both tonally and stylistically. *When It Comes* is a mood piece on which Gavanski appears to chronicle living through a waking dream.

Kieron Tyler

Ben Marc

★★★★

Glass Effect

INNOVATIVE LEISURE. CD/DL/LP

Musical worlds blur on Jonny Greenwood and Mulatu Astatke collaborator's progressive debut.

A double bass graduate of London's Trinity College and ex-Shabaka Hutchings bandmate in free jazz trio Zed-U, Ben Marc (alias Neil Charles) developed his compositional skills in the shadow of bill-paying shifts with Matthew Herbert, Soweto Kinch and Tina Turner. The propulsive beats, loping low-end and metallic synths of *Glass Effect* push the swirling arrangements of last year's Breathe Suite EP into a deeper realm, Mustard's knuckle-wrapping percussion and Jawbone's threatening broken beats intricately layered with moody string arrangements. Yet while Keep Moving's weaving flutes and Dark Clouds' sozzled parade of tense hi-hats and off-beam trumpets seem like further profound meditations on troubled times, a sensitive cameo from Attica Blues' singer Midnight Roba and a delicately nuanced rap from Joshua Idehen summon hope when least expected.

Andy Cowan

Haunted house: Ghost Power get on a pulsating retro-futurist tip.

Carolina Sanchez

Ghost Power

★★★★

Ghost Power

DUOPHONIC SUPER 45s. CD/DL/LP

Stereolab anchorman resurfaces for more bachelor-pad hi-jinks.

Although they've reconvened for live shows since 2019, Stereolab 2.0 have been reluctant so far to release any new material. After a few albums as part of Cavern Of Anti-Matter, Tim Gane's esoteric recording energies currently seem focused on Ghost Power, a duo with New Yorker Jeremy Novak, who Stereolab completists might recall from Dymaxion, signed to Duophonic in the '90s. Ghost Power's full-length debut is, happily, pretty much what you'd expect: pulsating retro-futurist instrumentals, seemingly designed for a science-fiction spy TV show on the cusp of the '70s, with Peter Thomas's looming score for Raumpatrouille a likely inspiration (especially on Grimalkin). The best 'Lab analogue is probably '94's *Mars Audiac Quintet*, but among the high-fidelity squelch and harpsichord trim, there are neat, albeit Deutsche-aligned, innovations: a touch of '80s Tangerine Dream on Vertical Section; 15 minutes of levitational ambient ritual on the closing Astral Melancholy Suite.

John Mulvey

The William Loveday Intention

★★★★

Paralysed By The Mountains

DAMAGED GOODS. CD/DL/LP

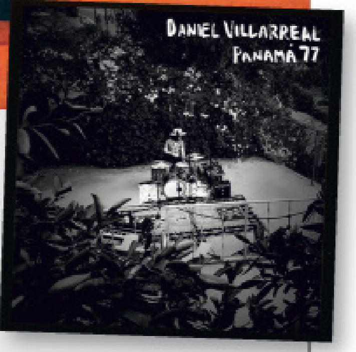
Next instalment in the Billy Childish-led outfit's "career in a year."

Although *Paralysed By The Mountains* includes new songs (Stood Upon A Chair, an unromantic retelling of the Jesse James story for one), it's the Intention's radical remaking of their leader's musical past that provides the main interest. Here, The MBE's Joe Strummer's Grave is shorn of its punky vitriol to become an effective folk blues lamentation, and Thee Headcoats' Gun In My Father's Hand and The Day I Beat My Father Up are recast as murder ballads, framed with wailing harmonica and strummed guitar and delivered with a dignity-cloaking silent rage. For Billy Childish, however, the album highlight – that he cites as one of his best recordings – is a cover of Mississippi Fred McDowell's You've Gotta Move. Sung as a duet with his wife Julie over electric slide guitar from Dave Tattersall, it's both of the earth and heavenly.

Lois Wilson

JAZZ

BY ANDY COWAN



Daniel Villarreal

★★★★

Panamá 77

INTERNATIONAL ANTHEM. DL/LP

Texturally deep solo debut from percussive hub of Chicago bands Dos Santos, Valebol and Ida y Vuelta.

A flexible mainstay of several folkloric Latin outfits in his adopted city of Chicago, Daniel Villarreal's homage to his birthplace draws on the improvisatory skills of fellow scene stylists including Elliot Bergman, Kellen Harrison, Jeff Parker and Bardo Martinez. Yet Villarreal never lets his rattling battalions of shakers, congas, bells and shells overtake their creations, whether driving the mellow drones of In/On, sensual guitar/violin abstractions of Cali Colours, winding Herbie Hancock-esque Rhodes of Parque En Seis or the laid-back Roy Ayers vibes of 18th & Morgan. Despite sounding effortlessly organic, Villarreal's post-production edits are a critical part of the process (see also: Makaya McCraven, Junius Paul), hybridising subtle shades of cumbia, chicha, folk, reggaeton and salsa into his forward-facing, flowing slant on jazz.

ALSO RELEASED

Tom Sochas

★★★★

The Sorcerer

KHUMBU. DL/LP

Age-old folklore informs the curious solo debut of this Franco-American pianist. While the Phoenician Blinds mainstay jumbles modern classical with post-bop amid The Spell's rippling tension and release, sympathetic turns by bassist Thodoris Ziarkas and drummer Olly Sarkar help elevate the tender Lament and an aching, aberrant take on Nirvana's All Apologies out of the ordinary and into EST-territory. *The Sorcerer* resonates deeper with every play.

JOYFULTALK

★★★★

Familiar Science

CONSTELLATION. CD/DL/LP

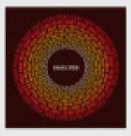
Something of a DIY maverick, Calgary outlier Jay Crocker partners with local musicians over flipped drum samples to create a sometimes abrasive yet utterly compelling set of smudged avant-jazz burners, lit up by Nicola Miller's wayward sax runs and his own skewed fretwork. Pitched somewhere between Ornette Coleman's *Science Fiction*, Makaya McCraven's cut-ups and Sunset Ensemble's AI experiments, the energy of its insistent flights of fancy is undeniable.

Shake Stew

★★★★

Heat

TRAUMTON. CD/DL



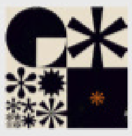
The spiritual jazz and Afrobeat-mangling Austrian septet reveal a softer, intimate side on their fifth album. But while searching horns trace more mournful vistas on Unmight and Lucidity, any sense that they've lost their formidable thrust vanishes amid the title track's rabid log drums and Oh Captain, My Captain!'s complex criss-crossing rhythms, as duelling double basses plot brutally effective byways to tranced-out euphoria.

Gilad Hekselman

★★★★

Far Star

EDITION. CD/DL/LP



The Israeli guitarist's ripe melodicism and unfussy technique come out to play on his most considered LP yet. Long Way From Home's spaghetti western theme and Fast Moving Century's liberated fret runs – duets with Houston drum voyager Eric Harland – contrast with yearning affairs that cleverly toy with timbres and textures. Never tethered to one style, *Far Star*'s burnished bounce and gentle touch belie its hidden depths. *AC*

Space rockers: Rolling Blackouts C.F. (clockwise from top left) Marcel Tussie, Tom Russo, Joe Russo, Joe White and Fran Keaney are "thrillingly ablaze" on third LP.

Infinite Joy

Great white hopes of Aussie rock serve up third belter on the bounce. By Andrew Perry.

Rolling Blackouts Coastal Fever

★★★★★

Endless Rooms

SUB POP. CD/DL/LP

FOR THIS electrifying three-guitar quintet from Melbourne, the years of early career uplift have presented above-and-beyond challenges. After extensive groundwork around 2018's revelatory debut *Hope Downs*, including umpteen half-globe flights to make advances here, June 2020's crowning glory *Sideways To New Italy* was tarnished by its emergence amid the world's longest Covid lockdowns in their home state of Victoria.

Coming through now with their third long-player, RBCF identify the sudden, unscheduled disconnect between touring's sensory overload and Covid's sensory deprivation as, inevitably, the very stuff of *Endless Rooms*. The worry would obviously be that this jarring effect had somehow jolted them off track.

During Pearl Like You's dreamy 64-second synth-muzak overture, a door creaks open, and it almost feels as if you've just walked into the wrong album. The theme of international hotel-hopping disorientation crystallises on the penultimate title track: against a beatless tangle of guitars and moody synth, brother Tom Russo depicts the itinerant combo, in melancholy, Nikki Sudden-esque tones, as "masters of the smallest talk, just trying to find somewhere to lay down", and you certainly recognise their pain.

It takes barely two minutes of second track Tidal River, however, to detect that no waning of energies has occurred: Marcel Tussie's crisp, My Sharona-style stutter-beat and Joe Russo's propulsive bassline launch a breathtaking onslaught of chiming six-strings which, finally, at 1:51 gives way to a fabulous chorus release, before the roller coaster hurtles on for another hair-raising two and a half minutes.

Both to write and record, Rolling Blackouts withdrew to the Russo family's lakeside holiday home in upstate Victoria (pictured on the sleeve), where high ceilings and first-time self-production wizardry summon guitar sounds to die for – sonically, this record's a gourmet feast to rank alongside fellow countryman Ed Kuepper's *Electrical Storm*, or even, whisper it, Television's *Marquee Moon*.

As well as forced off-road for the entirety of *Sideways*' shelf life, the band were grounded in the more positive sense of reconnecting with their native country. *Endless Rooms* is, however, littered with voices of pig-ignorance they've encountered at home, enabled, they believe, by PM Scott Morrison's reactionary governance. In Tidal River, Tom Russo satirises entitled white Aussies' occupation of indigenous tribes' land, as one surfer arrogantly reasons, "It's January, we're on vacation/Take your complaint to the United Nations/I feel my wave coming on".

Russo's songs are exceptional – Saw You At The Eastern Beach's petrochemical clang recalls late-'80s NZ noiseniks Bailter Space – and his singer-songwriting sidekicks equally excel: Fran Keaney serves up the breezy, Go-Betweens-y Open Up Your Window, Joe White the urgent, twitchy The Way It Shatters – and as in-house fret-mangler, White's soloing, particularly on Saw You…, is incendiary. Fired throughout by the hottest rhythm section in modern alt-rock, *Endless Rooms* presents a tightly-knit ensemble creatively, thrillingly ablaze.

Jon Spencer & The HITmakers

★★★★

Spencer Gets It Lit

BRONZERAT. CD/DL/LP

NYC post-hardcorist keeps the blues exploding, with bonus synth.

AFTER CALLING time on JSBX in 2016 due to guitarist Judah Bauer's tour-nixing respiratory condition (among other unspecified woes), Spencer struck back with his HITmakers, the name a wry nod to 37-odd years of ramalama excellence without the faintest sniff of a commercial garland. This hugely entertaining second long-player mixes the madcap fun of early Blues Explosion records (*Extra Width*; *Orange*), with the junkyard wallop of JS's late-'80s combo Pussy Galore, even administered by re-hired drummer Bob Bert. Primary Baby and the Cramps-y Germ Vs Jerk generate in-your-face slam-punk/blues. Elsewhere, a welcome spaciousness allows newbie Sam Coomes, of Quasi fame, to tootle amusingly no-fi retro keyboards for an all-new Spencerian sonic balance. Opener Junk Man boasts an infuriatingly catchy, Trio-esque two-finger melody, The Worst Facts imagines a tinpot Devo, and funk strut Worm Town culminates (possibly) in demented down-tuned Theremin.

Andrew Perry

Crowning glory: Jon Spencer & The HITmakers bring the punk-blues ramalama.

Pierre Kwenders

★★★★

José Louis And The Paradox Of Love

ARTS & CRAFTS. CD/DL/LP

Congolese rumba, R&B and electronica combine on Montreal-based musician's diverting third LP.

Pierre Kwenders' meld of world music and electronica hits a seductive peak on opener L.E.S. (Liberté Égalité Sagacité). A forward-facing three-way with 'blacktronica' pioneer King Britt and Arcade Fire's Win Butler, it transmutes from a spaced-out slow jam with fluttering shades of William Onyeabor into an uplifting dance epic that feels like a natural leap forward from 2017's exploratory *Makanda*… The hook-dominated frisky grooves and shifty drum loops that follow initially seem less striking, but his insistent tribute to late Congolese singer Papa Wemba, the deep onomatopoeic raps of Coupé and a butter-wouldn't-melt duet with French singer Sônge teem with urgency. As he slips seamlessly between tongues (English, French, Lingala, Tshiluba and Kikongo), Kwenders exudes a poetic warmth that's hard to resist.

Andy Cowan

Bonnie Raitt

★★★

Just Like That…

REDWING. CD/DL/LP

First LP in six years revitalises the great guitarist and survivor.

Six years after her last LP, *Dig In Deep*, *Just Like That…* reinvigorates 72-year-old Bonnie Raitt's career, and even on her eighteenth studio LP she can find new worlds to explore. As one of those new worlds involves adding funk to her roots rock sound on Waitin' For You To Blow, she might easily have fallen flat but for the grit of the subject matter – the easy pitfalls of addiction recovery – and the fact that she toured with the likes of Muddy Waters and John Lee Hooker in her youth. It's testament to Raitt's willingness to hang her life experience on the line, too, but the core of *Just Like That...*, from slick single Made Up Mind to touching acoustic closer Down The Hall, is solid and dependable rather than spectacular.

Andy Fyfe

Michael Lavine

Frontperson

★★★

Parade

OSCAR ST. CD/DL/LP

Where New Pornographers meet Woodpigeon for the second time.

Frontperson recorded their self-titled debut in a museum, but this time New Pornographers keyboardist/vocalist Kathryn Calder and Woodpigeon leader Mark Andrew Hamilton were tempted by the more conventional environment of a studio. They've taken a giant leap forwards. Utilising a little from both parent acts without sounding like either, it's a cavalcade of multi-layered sound as the Canadian duo roll and tumble like Cocteau Twins circa Pearly-Dewdrops' Drops on Visions, and hurtle into Arcade Fire-style harmony on Fastest, which ends with a glockenspiel wig-out. The pair's vocals are very different – him, all rueful on the ballad Tattoo Boy; her, warm and ethereal on the woozy Table Of Contents – but they're complementary and when the pair crash into each other, trading lines on Ostalgie (Für C. Bischoff) in sparkling fashion, they really are quite special.

John Aizlewood

John Illsley

★★★

VIII

100%. CD/DL/LP

Dire Straits bassist's eighth album. Sounds like Dire Straits.

Apart from Mark Knopfler, John Illsley was the only Dire Straits member to last the full course. They're still friends (Knopfler wrote the introduction to Illsley's recent autobiography), but with no reunion on anyone's horizon, Illsley has taken it upon himself to maintain the legacy. *VIII* is his most Dire Strait-ish outing, his voice assuming hitherto undiscovered levels of grizzle and his songs moving at stately Private Investigations pace. Illsley lacks Knopfler's songwriting flair, but there's a jaunty cover of The Beatles' I'm Only Sleeping; It's A Long Way Back examines his time as a global stadium filler ("there was so much I didn't know… looking back it felt like a dream") and just about resists the temptation to break into Sultans Of Swing; while Market Town, with its stentorian piano introduction, evokes an idyllic childhood. His personal and professional past remain untarnished.

John Aizlewood

Dean Owens

★★★★

Sinner's Shrine

EEL PIE. CD/DL/LP

Long-delayed collaboration with Calexico finally sees daylight.

Leith native Dean Owens has long been in love with the American South-west, so much so that after honeymooning in Death Valley he and his wife parked up their Airstream on the edge of Joshua Tree National Park, so they have a semi-permanent base whenever they return. Song-title clues such as Arizona and New Mexico notwithstanding, Owens' love of giant blue skies and dusty landscapes is evident throughout his seventh album, given genuine Tex-Mex hues thanks to Calexico acting as his main backing band. Alongside contributions from Grant-Lee Phillips and Guatemalan singer Gaby Morena, Owens sings with a dark majesty that matches the gigantic emotional pull of his songs, finding the beauty at the heart of tragic events and mundane places. A deeply thoughtful and moving album of dirt-caked desert noir.

Andy Fyfe

Tess Parks

★★★

And Those Who Were Seen Dancing

FUZZ CLUB. CD/DL/LP

Second outing from Toronto-born, London-based haze merchant.

Alan McGee protégée Parks' debut was acclaimed, and in the interim she partnered with Brian Jonestown Massacre's Anton Newcombe, building more loops and electronica into her darkly psychedelic rock. Now she's back solo, and opener WOW could be a languid Nico. Over synth drones, Parks' astral voice sighs: "Hey babe, I know/You been working hard/Let's take a holiday/Just you and me…" A caustic edge makes this a definite threat. The R&B of Suzy & Sally's Eternal Return has the menace of a drowsy sidewinder, while the piano on Happy Birthday Forever's gospel echoes Fatboy Slim's Praise You, albeit with scathing lyrics. A few numbers tread too similar a beat; but then there's the gumshoe monologue of Brexit At Tiffany's and the Sergio Leone mash-up of Saint Michael – which is windswept, stately and might, just might, be hopeful.

Glyn Brown

Bob Vylan
★★★★

Bob Vylan Presents The Price Of Life

GHOST THEATRE. CD/DL/LP

Hugely entertaining state-of-the-nation address from grime-punk folk devils.

Bob Vylan vocalist Bobby Vylan is the imaginary lovechild of Prodigy mainstays Keith Flint and Maxim Reality – a gleeful provocateur who dances with equal delight on the graves of tabloid fears and liberal pre-conceptions. The duality at the heart of this spiky London duo (Bobby's less-vocal helpmeet is drummer Bobbie Vylan) channels anarcho-punk lyrical directness through rap-metal's stadium clout. Hence Take That's provocative post-Colston statue update of Public Enemy's Fight The Power: "Give Churchill's statue the rope and see if it floats… yeah, let the bitch drown, got the gammons feeling sick now." The whole thing is furious, funny ("Alexa, take me to prison!") and, not least in the toy-town conscious reggae of Health Is Wealth ("Plenty lentils and chick pea curry/ 20-minute meal for a man in a hurry"), deeply loveable.

Ben Thompson

C Duncan
★★★★

Alluvium

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

Fourth album from one-man architect of exquisite baroque-pop.

Despite a 2014 Mercury nomination and regularly making Scottish Album of the Year shortlists, Christopher Duncan still floats under the radar. It seems that everyone indebted to Zombies/Beach Boys dreamscapes (Eric Matthews comes to mind) are destined to remain cult heroes, lost in their immaculately crafted labyrinths of sound. *Alluvium* sounds like it was made in a sky room, all light and air – the opposite of the earthy deposits the album is named after – with a side-line in wan Euro-mantic pop tailor-made for Françoise Hardy to cover, starting with Bell Toll. Duncan mostly sounds isolated and downbeat ("You don't come around here any more like you used to do… I've seen the end/You've taken all I have") but closing pair The Wedding Song and Upon The Table are crazy-in-love ballads with an unexpected '50s feel, more suited to Elvis than Françoise.

Martin Aston

The Wave Pictures
★★★★

When The Purple Emperor Spreads His Wings

MOSHI MOSHI. CD/DL/LP

Leicestershire indie-rockers' definitive 20-song splurge.

True, a tribute song to a TV snooker presenter is very 'indie': The Wave Pictures' seventeenth self-penned collection in 19 years includes, buried on side three, the hilarious Hazel Irvine, where green-baize intrigue and stalker-ish lyrical comedy ("she's too good for the BBC, she does her research proper-lee," etc) obviously recall Half Man Half Biscuit's The Len Ganley Stance. As any Wave Pics aficionado will attest, however, this dextrous combo are purveyors of anything but pallid alt-rock; in this case thrillingly channelling supercharged mid-'60s R&B. Covid only boosted mainman Dave Tattersall's furious productivity and extravagant guitar-playing: *WTPESHW* resembles both The Clash's *London Calling*, showcasing a breathtaking spread of influence and ability, and an Ali Smith novel, each side of vinyl unfolding in one of the four seasons with soulful reflections on times joyous and sad. Nodding towards Nick Drake and Lou Reed, Sun rockabilly and Syd Barrett, it's inspirational throughout.

Andrew Perry

Honeyglaze
★★★★

Honeyglaze

SPEEDY WUNDERGROUND. CD/DL/LP

Youthful South London trio record enchanting debut in three days.

The latest addition to producer/label owner Dan Carey's choice Speedy Wunderground roster, Honeyglaze deal in dead-pan bedroom indie of no little vision, much of the magic stemming from vocalist/guitarist Anouska Sokolow's beautifully naturalistic voice. "I look nothing like Madonna/More like an '80s horror film", she sings on Female Lead, a tale of hair-bleaching gone awry. Like Shadows and I Am Not Your Cushion, it's the tightly arranged stuff of perfect, two-to-three-minute pop, but there's a proggy, math-rock exactitude to the similarly fine Half Past, and another chance for bassist Tim Curtis's tasteful melodicism to shine on Burglar's motorik-goth outro. Sokolow, Curtis and drummer Yuri Shibuichi will be on tour supporting Wet Leg by the time you read this – a fitting pairing, since Honeyglaze, too, deserve your rapt attention.

James McNair

Pete Gow
★★★★

Leo

CLUBHOUSE. CD/DL/LP

Brassy third solo album by former Case Hardin frontman.

Former war correspondent Pete Gow has long been at the forefront of UK Americana: his previous albums – four with now-defunct band Case Hardin and two solo – are of such consistently high quality that he should be spoken of in the same breath as the likes of Jason Isbell. Gow's power is in the way his songs tell short stories, whether it's the hard-boiled tale of retired criminal Leo, pulled in for one last doomed job on the epic Leonard's Bar, or the fallen angel of Eight Long Years, who's hoping for someone to "…call me pretty/Before they call me pretty for my age". Always looking to expand and progress, alongside multi-instrumentalist/producer Joe Bennett (Dreaming Spires, Bennett Wilson Poole) the Scotsman has added in bold-as-brass horns and a giant dollop of Southern soul to create Gow's crowning achievement to date.

Andy Fyfe

The Bros. Landreth
★★★★

Come Morning

BIRTHDAY CAKE. CD/DL/LP

Winnipeg, Canada-based siblings lace their rootsy country with blue-eyed soul.

If there's more than a smidge of Hall & Oates about *Come Morning's* heady opener Stay, it figures. John Oates was reportedly so taken with Joey and David Landreth's stuff that he offered to support them live. Burnished to a fine shine with trusted co-producer Murray Pulver, the siblings' third LP also seems fruitfully cognisant of The Neville Brothers (see title track), *Diamonds & Pearls*-era Prince (Corduroy), and the forward-looking guitar stylings of Blake Mills (You Don't Know Me). But best of all is the down-tempo train-beat of Don't Feel Like Crying, wherein the exquisite voices of Joey Landreth and guest backing vocalist Leith Ross conjure Don Henley duetting with kd lang. Mellifluously smooth – and the fruit of much-improved Landreth relations following David's 2016-2019 band-halting sabbatical – *Come Morning* feels like a whole new dawn.

James McNair

Jo Schornikow
★★★★

Altar

KEELED SCALES. CD/DL/LP

Music without borders: the Nashville-based Australian's third album ventures down the LA soft-rock highway.

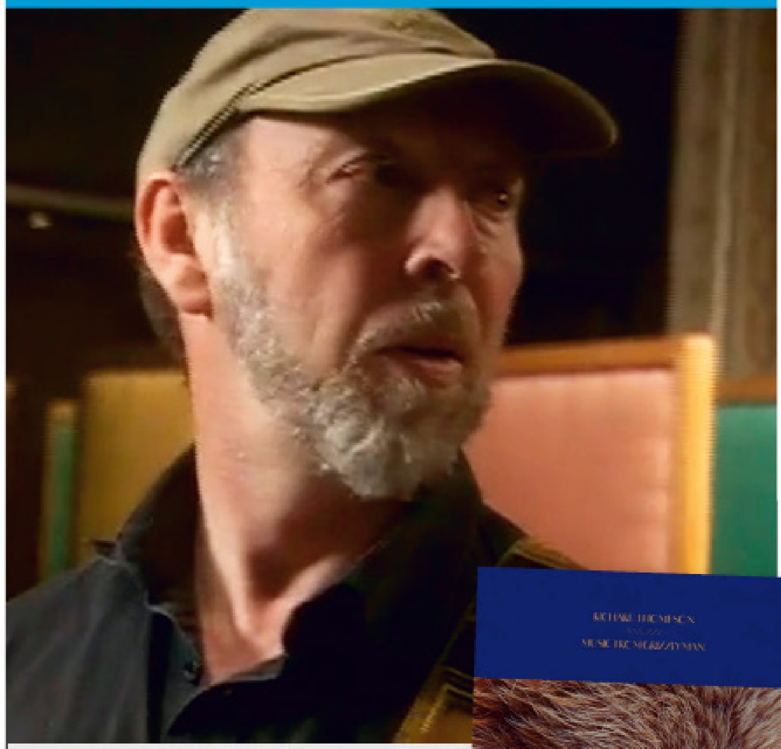
Jo Schornikow: radiant melody and disarming insecurity.

JO SCHORNIKOW'S first two albums were sparser affairs, but *Altar* shares the same glowing reprise of '70s singer-songwriter soft rock as Schornikow's partner, Matthew 'Phosphorescent' Houck's – with whom she also plays piano. Her gorgeous take on the form has similar brooding notes, but a breezier touch, and a voice that slides alongside Sharon Van Etten. Mid-'70s Stevie Nicks might also be a touchstone, contrasting radiant melody with disarming feelings of insecurity; in this case, the couple's move to Nashville, new parenthood and feeling like a stranger in a strange land. *Altar's* lyrics mix the illogic of dreams – "Spiders in mind/ Drop down through mouths and fingertips sometimes" she murmurs in the semi-ambient murk of Spiders – with moments of stark clarity: "I'm calling fear and boredom/You're calling names I'm not repeating," Schornikow declares in the perfect-pop glide of Visions.

Martin Aston

SOUNDTRACKS

BY ANDREW MALE



Richard Thompson

★★★★★

Grizzly Man

NO QUARTER. CD/DL/LP

Nature's beauty and horror conjured up in the English guitarist's masterful, reissued score.

Like Miles Davis's *Lift To The Scaffold* and Neil Young's *Dead Man*, Richard Thompson's guitar score for Werner Herzog's 2005 documentary about the life (and death) of American film-maker/bear enthusiast Timothy Treadwell was effectively improvised live. Accompanied at various points by Henry Kaiser's big-noise electric guitar, Jim O'Rourke's music box piano, plus occasional bass, cello and percussion, Thompson's guitar moves from Celtic romanticism via unresolved modal melancholy to churning avant noise, seeking the "ecstatic truth" of Herzog's film, and Treadwell's tragic story. Now remastered, with the non-Thompson track, Coyotes, excised, Thompson's playing exhibits a narrative and emotional vividness dazzling to behold. "I don't write about my 'oneness with nature'", he once told MOJO. "I have to write about grittier, darker things. The demons that haunt you." Grizzly Man is proof, if proof were needed, that he can achieve that with guitar alone.

Abul Mogard

★★★★

In A Few Places Along The River

BANDCAMP. DL

Absorbing sound design shrouded in a cloak of deep ambient drone.

It's hard to listen to Abul Mogard's lead-heavy ambient without reading it as a dark electronic soundtrack for our times. *In A Few Places Along The River* is as melancholic and beautiful a record as this shadowy figure has created over a decade-long career. We know that Mogard's initial backstory – sexagenarian Serbian sheet metal worker is latent synth genius – is fiction, and that their true origin lies across the Adriatic. Whatever its provenance, this is transcendent music. Against A White Cloud begins in the far distance, then creeps ever closer with ominous intensity. Swirling chords are consumed by skirls of distortion before leaving as calmly as it arrived. In True Contemplation follows a similar pattern, characterised by a foreboding throb before ceding to the sepulchral, glacial-paced majesty of Along The River. This is music that impacts long after the final note has sounded.

Stephen Worthy

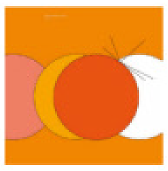
Action & Tension & Space

★★★★

Tellus

RUNE GRAMMOFON. CD/DL/LP/MC

Trippy Norse fusion of jazz, motorik and space rock.



Tellus begins abruptly with Chromosomes. It's as if a door has suddenly opened on a performance that's already in progress. Over its six-plus minutes, recognisable components bubble up: *Future Days* and *Tago Mago* Can, *A Saucerful Of Secrets*' spaciness, Jenny Ondioline-era Stereolab. Elsewhere on the all-instrumental fourth album by these psych-motorik explorers from Haugesund on Norway's west coast (their first for high-status imprint Rune Grammofon), the nods to Lalo Schifrin parallel those of fellow Norwegians Jaga Jazzist. As ATS includes mainstays of psych rockers Electric Eye, The Low Frequency In Stereo and soundscapers Lumen Drones, the stylistic pool is broad. Yet despite the touchstones, freshness comes from the outfit's five core members revelling in the tension of playing against and with each other. It all seamlessly fuses on this elegant trip into inner space.

Kieron Tyler

Eli Paperboy Reed: he's ready for the country.

Wes Dorman

Kee Avil

★★★★

Crease

CONSTELLATION. CD/DL/LP

Montreal avant-songsmith's singular debut. Think Scott Walker meets Little Annie.

Introducing her astonishing folk-pop soundscapes, art-rock/improv-grounded Kee Avil reveals that she's aiming for "raw, tumbling sculptures, meticulously assembled to resemble disassembly, sometimes held together by nothing more than intent." Her first long-player's 10 compositions feel constructed around outside-the-box production brainwaves, juxtaposing arcane instrumentation and intimate voicing with glitchily high-tech sound manipulation, plus bass pulses and rhythmic puttering that would be more at home on a future-forward dubstep record. Saf, the second track, updates the cracked timekeeping of Strugglin' from Tricky's *Maxinquaye*, for a postmillennial yet still ageless study in desperation. Elsewhere, Drying's Pavement-y picking and I Too, Bury's Thelonious Monk-ishly wayward piano notes further foster listener destabilisation. Her parched near-death whisper on Devil's Sweet Tooth recalls Michael Gira at his most abandoned, but Avil's sheer 'intent' – the ferocity of her vision; her romantic disillusion – coupled with unpredictable wafts of delicious melodic certainty, make *Crease* a compulsive 36-minute journey through an aural dreamworld.

Andrew Perry

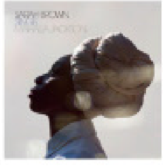
Sarah Brown

★★★★

Sarah Brown Sings Mahalia Jackson

LIVE. CD/DL

Soul-nourishing homage to the great gospel matriarch.



Boasting an impressive resumé stacked with credits that range from Pink Floyd to Madness and Stevie Wonder, Aylesbury-born Brown was raised in the Pentecostal church where she learned the language and emotional power of gospel music. After many years as a background vocalist, she steps into the spotlight with this nine-song debut album paying tribute to the influential singer Mahalia Jackson, whose richly melismatic cadences shaped modern African-American sacred music. Supported by a small cast of simpatico musicians, including piano ace Colin Good, Brown serves up a sanctified feast that is infused with flavours from jazz (Didn't It Rain), Latin music (On My Way) and rhythm and blues (Walk Over God's Heaven). Most impressive of all is the album's finale; a short but entrancing version of Amazing Grace where Brown's warm, soulful voice glows with a haunting beauty.

Charles Waring

Eli Paperboy Reed

★★★★

Down Every Road

YEP ROC. CD/DL/LP

R&B revivalist's compelling argument for Merle Haggard as Soul Brother Number 1.

Channelling Light In The Attic's *Country Funk* compilations and dispelling The Blues Brothers' suggestion that country and soul make strange bedfellows, *Down Every Road* finds R&B scholar Reed rewriting the songbook of twang legend Merle Haggard as classic '60s soul. Carefully avoiding the more reactionary numbers in Haggard's discography, Reed grabs the common threads running through both genres (love, loneliness, longing), replacing the pedal steel with bold horns and sturdy rhythms, and conjuring an alternate reality where Haggard signed with Stax or recorded with Jerry Wexler. If Reed's enthusiastic holler doesn't quite equal Haggard's weathered tenor, everything else makes perfect sense, especially when he recasts Somewhere Between as yearning Southern soul *à la* Dark End Of The Street and locates a righteous funk within Workin' Man Blues via some shimmering lead guitar.

Stevie Chick

ALSO RELEASED

Lucrecia Dalt

★★★

The Seed

INVADA. DL/LP

Sam Walker's 2021 horror movie is a hot mess, a throwback to such '80s body horror experiences as Xtro and Society. Dalt's score lends it a weight and a drive, the Colombian composer's mix of rhythmic tape-delay pulses and Korg Monologue sci-fi disquiet adding an emotional richness to the low-budget thrills.

Eiko Ishibashi

★★★★

Drive My Car

BANDCAMP. CD/DL/LP

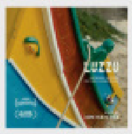
The first Japanese film nominated for Best Picture Oscar, Ryusuke Hamaguchi's enigmatic road movie has received numerous accolades, many rightly directed towards Ishibashi's gorgeous score, which moves from rhythmic piano jazz to yearning, intricately patterned ambience. CDs and vinyl sold out in no time but hopefully there'll be reissues, post-Oscars.

Jon Natchez

★★★

Luzzu

PHANTOM LIMB. DL/LP



For Alex Camilleri's modern neo-realist drama about a struggling Maltese fisherman, The War On Drugs' Jon Natchez has created a score that suggests a paring away of tradition and the coming of an unwelcome change, erosive strings anchored by thudding modernist basslines, a melancholy romanticism surrounded by electronic unease.

Blanck Mass

★★★★

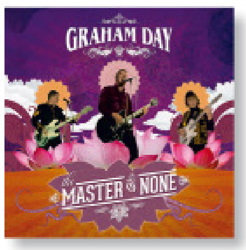
Ted K

SACRED BONES. CD/DL/LP

The second film score from Fuck Buttons' Benjamin John Power finds the perfect subject for his unique blend of industrial pummelling and ambient bliss: US terrorist Ted 'Unabomber' Kaczynski. As with Kaczynski's own philosophy, this is paradise versus the industrial machine, pastoral soundscapes meeting apocalyptic rumblings of subterranean dread. *AM*

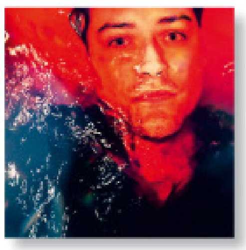
Bloc Party
★★★
Alpha Games
BMG/INFECTIOUS. CD/DL/LP
Seventeen years since *Silent Alarm*, BP retain a youthful fixation with personal drama, biting lyrics and angular guitars, laced with keyboards. Highlights: viciously funny Callum Is A Snake; dancefloor glam The Girls Are Fighting ("and the boys can't cope"). *JB*

Dälek
★★★
Precipice
IPECAC. CD/DL/LP
Alt-rap's answer to MBV, this New Jersey duo still capture modern life's uneasy tension ("Society's been failing you!" rails Incite) with poetic acuity through waves of texture and thunderous drums. *Precipice* marries old-school wordplay with undimmed sonic fury. *AC*



Graham Day
★★★★
The Master Of None
COUNTDOWN. CD/LP
Prisoners garageman sings, plays every instrument, and produces on his solo debut. The hallmarks of his previous bands are all here too: Hendrixy, raw power guitars, '60s-styled melodies, soulful vocals and changing moods from rage to maudlin. *LW*

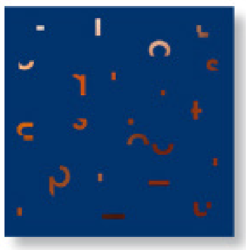
Fatoumata Diawara
★★★★
Maliba
MONTUNO. DL
Soundtracking a Google arts project on the Timbuktu Manuscripts, FD hymns these ancient cultural records in her genre-spanning blend of African tradition, pop, soul, urban and blues. *JB*



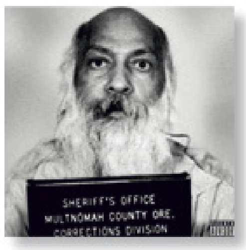
Gentle Sinners
★★★
These Actions Cannot Be Undone
ROCK ACTION. CD/DL/LP
Angry and angular, Aidan Moffat (Arab Strap) and James Graham (Twilight Sad) set tense ruminations on humanity to dense, often danceable production (Landfill's martial beats; Killing This Time's Gabriel-ised synths). *JB*

Glass Museum
★★★★
Reflet
SDBAN ULTRA. CD/DL/LP
The Belgian keys/drums duo's most future-leaning affair refines their singular dynamic. Be it Caillebotis's light shuffle or the title track's symphonic undulations, these dancefloor-friendly explorations switch between jazz, electronica and prog without a jarring note. *AC*

Half Man Half Biscuit
★★★★
The Voltarol Years
R.M. QUALTROUGH. CD/DL/LP
Erudite bafflement, morbid humour, lockdown satire, and emotional like Barber's Adagio For Strings. (Winning title: Tess Of The Dormobiles). Even the label name – farewell Probe Plus – delivers! *IH*



Nightports
★★★★
Nightports w/ Tom Herbert
LEAF. CD/DL/LP
The LP series chop/splicing a guest's improvs peaks with the Polar Bear bassist. Hibernal's pulsing espionage, Arcs' skewed jazz and Lumin's dark techno somehow all emerge from Herbert's free play. *AC*



Robert
★★★★
Orange Is The New Black
ANTELOPE. DL/LP
A midlands rapper serving his third prison term decided to break the cycle. His story is told via The Purist's psych/punk-inspired beats and Kool Keith, Jason Williamson, Slug and Rag 'N' Bone Man. *AC*

The Stroppies
★★★
Levity
TOUGH LOVE. CD/DL/LP
Melbourne quartet's laconic indie jangle ups the agitation with spiralling guitars and rhythmic propulsion worthy of their legendary pop forebears, The Go-Betweens (on Up To My Elbows especially). They're supporting Paul Weller on his April UK tour. *JB*

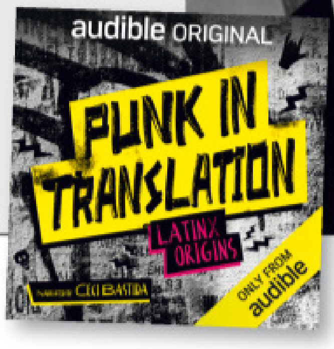
EXTENDED PLAY

Pod load

The first episode of **Punk In Translation** (Audible/Fresh Produce Media) studies punk's Latin origins, beginning with ? And The Mysterians, whose guitarist Bobby Balderrama remembers being branded "punk" by Dave Marsh in a 1971 live review. The narration, by singer-songwriter Ceci Bastida (also of Mexrrissey fame!), provides a clear, insightful through-line. A new **Last Of The Bohemians** series interviews three key cultural female figures, including inimitable British blues star Dana Gillespie (Ep 2) talking frolics at the Marquee club with Bowie and the Yardbirds, Dylan, New York in the '70s, the blues, spirituality and French kissing lion cubs. Digital radio station Radio Fandango (radiofandango.co.uk) uses an interview with the late Andy Ross from Food Records as the basis of a three-part podcast, **The Story Of Food Records With Andy Ross**. It's a no-frills format, but Ross is a great storyteller, romping through his time at Lewisham Our Price in the lovers rock era, on to writing for Sounds, discovering 'Seymour'… Blur, Britpop, the wider music industry and beyond.

? And The Mysterians: the pick of punk's Latin roots.

Getty



Various
★★★★
Simmerdim: Curlew Sounds
CURLEW SOUNDS. CD/DL
Folk-leaning benefit for RSPB's Curlew Recovery. Merlyn Driver hymns the bird's song in a resonant baritone, Cosmo Sheldrake recreates it electronically, The Unthanks soar. But the real stars are on disc two's field recordings. *JB*

Michael Weston King
★★★
The Struggle
CHERRY RED. CD/DL
The former Good Son ponders love, politics, the need for human alliance; richly-voiced emotional truths alleviate the odd platitude. Lovely country-soul settings (Sugar) suit the kindly tone. *JB*

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Under the counterculture

Tape rolls on the next instalments in Young's Official Bootleg Series; includes the legendary recording at The Bottom Line. By **David Fricke.**

Neil Young

Royce Hall 1971
★★★★
Dorothy Chandler Pavilion 1971
★★★★
Citizen Kane Jr. Blues 1974
★★★★

SHAKEY PICTURES/REPRISE. DL/LP

THIS IS WHY God made bootlegs. Late on the evening of May 16, 1974 – more like 2.30 the next morning – Neil Young took the stage at The Bottom Line, a new showcase club in lower Manhattan, as an unexpected special guest after late-show sets by Ry Cooder and Leon Redbone. Over the next hour, Young performed mostly as-yet-unreleased material including four songs from his next album, *On The Beach*, one of them the surrealist epic Ambulance Blues; Pardon My Heart, destined for 1975's *Zuma*; Long May You Run, introduced as a tune, "I wrote for my car"; and a song Young called Citizen Kane Jr. Blues – actually the legendary dirge Pushed It Over The End, played that summer with CSNY but forever left outside the studio door.

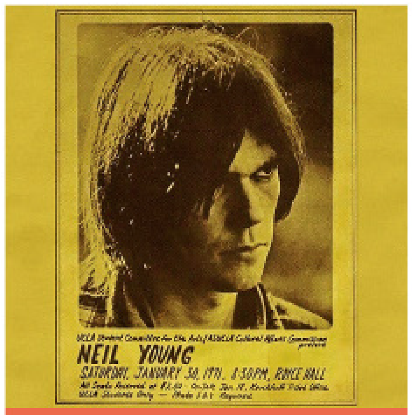
Someone had the presence of mind to roll tape, but not at the soundboard. The recording on *Citizen Kane Jr. Blues* – part of Young's Official Bootleg Series after decades of circulating like samizdat among the faithful – has the challenged audio of a cassette machine hidden inside a coat or under a napkin. It also has the precious, authentic thrill of one-night-only magic: Young so charged by the room, the moment, and his latest writing that he had to grab a guitar and mike. He's ragged in places, and the songs are heavy on the melancholy. "Here's another bummer for you," Young cracks ahead of Ambulance Blues. Two years after the Number 1 whiplash of *Harvest*, he's well into "the ditch", and the field recording puts you there. There has been nothing like this show on Young's long shelf of archival releases – until now.

For as long as there have been bootlegs, there have been artists trying to stump the brigands. Bob Dylan's Bootleg Series, a deluxe box set line launched in 1991, is up to 16 volumes. The Grateful Dead instituted a tapers' section at their shows, allowing fans to share the music for free, while Frank Zappa – an obsessive documentarian who was up to more than 60 albums when he died in 1994 and now has a posthumous discography of equal size – put out two box sets in the early '90s, *Beat The Boots! I* and *II*, in which he simply repressed actual bootlegs with the original artwork and fidelity.

BACK STORY: BOTTOM LINE BLING

● Founded by Allan Pepper and Stanley Snadowsky, The Bottom Line was New York's premier showcase room for three decades, opening on February 12, 1974 with a double bill of Dr. John and Gary Farr. Bruce Springsteen, Todd Rundgren, Laura Nyro and Lou Reed were among the artists who broadcast shows and recorded live there. Peter Cook and Dudley Moore taped part of the scabrous *Derek And Clive (Live)* at the club in 1974, and Lou Reed's insult-comic classic *Take No Prisoners* came from a 1978 engagement where he ripped into his label boss, Clive Davis, who was in the audience. "I was drunk, and I've always regretted that," Reed said later. "On the other hand, that's Lou!"

Getty



"Young is so charged by the room, the moment, that he had to grab a guitar and mike."

Young's Official Bootleg Series is a fascinating hybrid of reclamation – taking back from the black market what is rightfully his – and curatorial choice. *Carnegie Hall 1970*, issued last autumn, was not the widely-bootlegged second of Young's two solo, acoustic shows at that venue on December 4, 1970, but the never-circulated first, formally recorded – as if for a live album – by Joni Mitchell's engineer Henry Lewy. *Royce Hall* was also caught by Lewy two months later, on January 30, 1971, in Los Angeles at a students-only date on the UCLA campus (admission $2.50). But the difference in setlists reflects Young's astonishing rate of change at that point and his almost manic impatience with even the recent past. Nearly half of the songs on *Carnegie Hall 1970* – including three Buffalo Springfield tunes; The Loner, Helpless and a good chunk of that year's *After The Goldrush* – are gone by *Royce Hall*, replaced by a sizeable preview of *Harvest*, still a year from release.

If you feel an attack of déjà vu coming on, it's no pun and no wonder. Young has released two other shows from that January '71 solo tour: 2007's *Live At Massey Hall 1971* (Toronto) and last year's *Young Shakespeare* (Stratford, Connecticut). But there is a confidence and intensity at UCLA that explains why that concert was an under-the-counter favourite: Young's robust strumming and sharp, youthful singing, like an old soul in an impossibly alpine register, in the Springfield opener On The Way Home; the surprisingly hard bass-string staccato underpinning Heart Of Gold, as if Young was planning to take the song to Crazy Horse. And Young knew how good he was at UCLA, using that night's performance of The Needle And The Damage Done on *Harvest* and saving the piano ballad Love In Mind for 1973's *Time Fades Away*.

The final show of Young's so-called Journey Through The Past tour, recorded at LA's Dorothy Chandler Pavilion on February 1, 1971, two days after UCLA, is inevitably more of the same, professionally recorded with a slightly altered song order (no Down By The River). There is a definite air of victory lap: the title on the original vinyl-boot cover was "I'm happy that y'all came down" after a line in Young's chatty introduction to Heart Of Gold. "I've written a lot of new songs and I'll be doing most of 'em," he goes on, underscoring the obvious, then poking fun at the excited applause. "You don't have to do that. If you can just clap real loud at the end, that'll be cool – don't waste your energy."

There is also the sense of another chapter closing. Dance, Dance, Dance, a song he recently gave to Crazy Horse for their debut album, ends Young's last full US show until his *Time Fades Away* arena wars in 1973. And Young effectively retired Journey Through The Past itself, playing it on the tour but not including it on the soundtrack to his 1972 film of that name. Maybe it was the similarity in melody and lonesome-piano mood to After The Goldrush. But Journey Through The Past is more about what Young left behind in Canada than what was ahead for him (and the planet). Its shelving is also decisive evidence of Young's ability to see where one song is worth repeated performance and examination, but another has 'true classic' burned in its bones.

I could have docked *Dorothy Chandler Pavilion* a star for repetition, but if you're in this deep, that's small change. And these records each have a story to tell, affirming why we needed bootlegs in the first place: every night is different, and you don't know which ones are worth keeping until they're gone.

Heavenly recordings: the much-bootlegged Neil Young, Oakland Stadium, California, July 14, 1974, during the Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young US Tour.

T-Rex
★★★★★
1972
DEMON. CD/DL/LP

What Marc Bolan did in '72.

1972: the year the UK was gripped by Rexmania. Fifty years on there's a sense Bolan's stock's been reduced, his glam image and pop hits eclipsing the man's musical genius. This lavish 6-LP/5-CD box set (also an abridged double album), sets the record straight. We get studio recordings: *The Slider*, arguably Bolan's defining work where rock'n'roll's past meets its transgressive future; live performance, the raw visceral thrill of his matinee show at Wembley Empire Pool; the full soundtrack (for the first time) to *Born To Boogie* which immortalised the aforesaid concert. Key moment: Marc with Ringo and Elton John blasting through Little Richard's Tutti Frutti at Apple, and radio sessions spotlighting the emotional depth behind the über-sexuality. With a foreword by Tony Visconti and sleevenotes from Bolan authority MOJO's Mark Paytress, *1972* is a thing of beauty.

Lois Wilson

Yabby You & The Prophets
★★★★
The Yabby You Sound: Dubs & Versions
PRESSURE SOUNDS. CD/LP

Vintage version excursions from the 'Jesus Dread'.

Jamaican singer/producer Vivian 'Yabby You' Jackson literally made his name with 1972 debut 45 Conquering Lion. Its opening chant, "Be-you, yabby-yabby-you", gave him the sobriquet he'd be known by for the next four decades, while the tune itself set the template for his brand of deep, devotional roots reggae. This top-tier 20-track selection mines various heavyweight dub productions Yabby cut from 1975-82 with his harmony group The Prophets, plus vocalists Michael Prophet and Wayne Wade, at Kingston studios Dynamic, Black Ark, Harry J and Channel One. Standouts include the thunderous, echo-chamber science of Heads A Roll Dub and Vengeance In Dub's propulsive percussion rolls and squishy sound effects, deftly mixed by King Tubby and Prince Jammy respectively. Elsewhere, the prevailing undercurrent of dread is epitomised by Warrior No Tarry Yah Version's (a deconstruction of The Paragons' Man Next Door) amalgam of valley-deep bass vibrations and pulverising drums.

Simon McEwen

Marianne Faithfull
★★★★
Vagabond Ways
BMG. CD/DL/LP

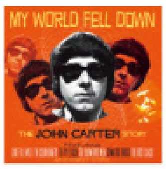
Deluxe reissue of Faithfull's 1999 album with six bonus tracks.

It says something for an album when its most uptempo song's a Leonard Cohen cover (Tower Of Song). Marianne's 13th album is a dark one, reflecting what was going on in the four years since *A Secret Life*: writing a memoir and singing Kurt Weill. The Faithfull-penned lyrics of the title track/opener read like memoir but make the dark truth blacker still. For Wanting You – written for her by Elton John and Bernie Taupin – is dramatic Euro beauty, while closer After The Ceasefire is spoken word. Producers Mark Howard and Daniel Lanois added all sorts of atmospheric strings and FX – so it's great to hear four demo versions, all of which I prefer. The other two bonus tracks: Drifting, a noir, late-night co-write with Lanois; and Blood In My Eyes (from the Japanese album release), cool blues, nightclubby, and a touch Dylan-esque.

Sylvie Simmons

John Carter
★★★★
My World Fell Down: The John Carter Story
GRAPEFRUIT. CD

The unsung backroom boy's tale: 105 tracks over four CDs.



In 1966, wearied by peddling The Ivy League's by-numbers pop on the road, leader and former ICI metallurgist John Carter retreated to the studio. From there, he sang vocals on the New Vaudeville Band's US Number 1 Winchester Cathedral, and a succession of faux groups such as Stamford Bridge and Stormy Petrel became vehicles for his thrusting but harmony-laden love songs, interspersed with curveballs such as the beguiling Conversation (In A Station Light Refreshment Bar) and Philwit & Pegasus's wig-out Pseudo Phoney Mixed Up Croney (sic). He didn't quite become the Phil Spector figure he aspired to be, but he struck gold twice. The Flower Pot Men's Let's Go To San Francisco, here in all its six-minute symphonic glory, was beautiful and elegiac, but the magical five-minute slab of harmonic, Brian Wilson-esque perfection that was The First Class's Top 5 1974 American hit Beach Baby remains Carter's towering achievement.

John Aizlewood

Sir Edward
★★★★
The Power Of Feeling
JAZZ ROOM. LP

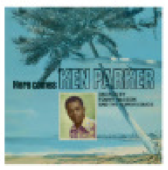
First ever reissue of a much coveted '70s jazz album.

Sir Edward was the alter ego of Harold Vick, a noted North Carolina saxophonist/flautist who recorded albums for Blue Note and RCA in the 1960s before joining drummer Jack DeJohnette's short-lived jazz-rock group Compost in 1971. The band was signed to Columbia, which presumably explains why Vick concealed his identity via a pseudonym for 1973's *Power Of Feeling*, originally released by drummer Bernard Purdie's small Encounter label. Blending ethereal spiritual jazz with ferocious funk and spacey soul-jazz grooves, the album is stylistically reminiscent of Freddie Hubbard's CTI recordings from the same era. Its highlights are plentiful, ranging from the exalted Latin-tinged sound of Peace, K.D., an elegy for the jazz trumpeter Kenny Dorham, to a breezy instrumental version of the classic Roberta Flack-Donny Hathaway duet, Where Is The Love. A lost classic deserving of a wider audience.

Charles Waring

Ken Parker
★★★
Here Comes Ken Parker
DOCTOR BIRD. CD/DL

Hot hits, cheesy covers and obscure misses from highly rated reggae crooner.



After a brief tenure in little-known harmony group the Blues Blenders, preacher's son Ken Parker began his solo career at Studio One, cutting a mix of gospel, soul covers and the odd original, but the breakthrough came at Duke Reid's Treasure Isle studio, where Parker hit big with soul-influenced originals I Can't Hide and True, True, True, followed later by hugely popular reggae adaptations of Charley Pride's Kiss An Angel Good Morning and The Browns' sentimental classic, The Three Bells. *Here Comes Ken Parker* gathered those Treasure Isle hits for Parker's first non-gospel LP, and this expanded edition comes with scattergun extras, including schmaltzy takes of Help Me Make It Through The Night and Groovin' Out On Life, a couple of Parker slack tunes, plus a bonus disc of singles voiced by labelmate Hopeton Lewis, who was also a preacher's son.

David Katz

Rush make *Moving Pictures*, Le Studio, Quebec, 1980: (from left) Neil Peart, Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson.

Yaël Brandeis

Rush
★★★★★
Moving Pictures – 40th Anniversary
UME/MERCURY/ANTHEM. CD/DL/LP

Canuck power trio's 1981 masterpiece gets a box set.

Drummer/lyricist Neil Peart's eloquent debunking of fame on Limelight; the dazzling instrumental interplay on Tom Sawyer; the escapist thrills of vintage Italian sports car reverie Red Barchetta – no wonder Rush's eighth studio LP became a fan favourite. As they embraced fizzy Oberheim OB-X synthesizers and further absorbed new-wave influences (see The Police-indebted Vital Signs), *Moving Pictures* was also the multi-million seller that took Rush out of theatres and into enormodomes, bringing financial and artistic freedom. Extras here include previously unreleased, then-career-spanning live material from a 1981 concert at Maple Leaf Gardens in the band's native Toronto, while the Super Deluxe Edition's hardback book has linernotes by Soundgarden's Kim Thayil, Foo Fighters' Taylor Hawkins and other devotees. There's new poignancy to the listening too, with Neil Peart dearly missed since he died in 2020.

James McNair

Norma Tanega: determined and uncompromising, sensitive and enlightening.

Cool for cats

Comprehensive career survey of the pioneering folk artist's hard-to-find work. By Andrew Male.

Norma Tanega

★★★★

I'm The Sky: Studio And Demo Recordings, 1964-1971

ANTHOLOGY RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

NORMA TANEGA lived three lives. It's how she saw herself and how her friends discuss her in Try To Tell A Fish About Water, a "biography of reflections" released by Anthology Recordings to accompany this new collection. The music, taken from official studio albums, abandoned projects and home demos, covers her first life, which began when the classical scholar born to Filipino and Panamanian parents in Long Beach, California, moved to New York in 1963 and immersed herself in the Greenwich Village folk scene. The Tanega that emerges in Try To Tell… is determined and uncompromising but also sensitive and enlightening. That's also the image given by the songs collected here.

The first disc brings together Tanega's studio recordings, taken from her 1966 debut *Walkin' My Cat Named Dog*, her impossible-to-find 1971 follow-up for RCA *I Don't Think It Will Hurt If You Smile*, and a brace of previously unreleased tracks from an abandoned 1969 LP, *Snow Cycles*. For an artist whose recorded work is so elusive, it's simultaneously thrilling and frustrating to hear this assembled overview. The opening tracks, 1966's Jubilation and 1971's Now Is The Time, are both declamatory numbers, the first about a freeing communal union of "One, two, three/You and I and us", the second a near-cousin of The Youngbloods' 1966 peace-and-love anthem, Get Together. Both are simultaneously strong willed and naive, and neither display Tanega at her best. Similarly, of the two versions of 1971's What More In This World Could Anyone Be Living For, the compilers choose the anthemic, choir-backed arrangement over the vulnerable, introspective version. Yet it's here where Tanega's genius lies, in a lightness of touch and a sensitivity to detail, as displayed in her 1966 hit, Walkin' My Cat Named Dog, but also 1971's circulatory, poetic love song Elephants, Angels And Roses and 1966's corrosively dark protest number You're Dead.

It's frustrating that only two songs from the abandoned *Snow Cycles* are present: a basic guitar instrumental entitled No One (Instrumental), and the exquisite When It Touches You, A Snowflake Dies. Written in the wake of her romance with Dusty Springfield, it's a love song where cryptic lyrical intensity is married to an arrangement of simple yet intricate beauty.

I'm The Sky's second disc is more satisfying. Assembled from demos discovered in Tanega's Claremont home after her death in 2019, these voice and six-string guitar numbers are, for the most part, soft-whispered, personal, questing and philosophical. They are the sound of someone with no further need to be the version of herself she once was; now free-floating, drifting, at ease.

In 1972, Tanega returned to California and became a painter and part of the Claremont LGBTQ community; her second life, before her third and final as a teacher. However, she kept recording music with such experimental folk outfits as Brian Ransom's Ceramic Ensemble. It would be great to hear those recordings next. But before that, could we have proper releases of *Snow Cycles* and *I Don't Think It Will Hurt If You Smile* please? This music is too good to only exist as fragments.

Ralph Weiss

Heart-breakers: Love Affair, with Steve Ellis (centre) get affectionate in 1967.

FILE UNDER…

Soul under the skin

A young Mod's forgotten story. By Jim Irvin.

WITH HIS skinhead hairdo, Mod background and sexy rasp, Steve Ellis, quite unexpectedly, became a 'dangerous' teenybop pin-up in 1968. The band he fronted, Love Affair, was put together by the drummer's wealthy dad, an effectively manufactured act which, initially, thought like the real thing. Their singles were cut using session musicians, a not uncommon late-'60s practice, but one that seemed to surprise the press enough to turn it into a semi-scandal, as if punters who had lofted the rousing, orchestral Everlasting Love to Number 1 – and three other singles into the Top 10 within a year – feeling the allure of the teenage Ellis's soulful voice, had somehow been conned. The screaming girls didn't care, but the resulting backlash – and the screaming girls – harmed the band's chances of being taken seriously as 'rock' dawned. Love Affair were considered no more authentic than, say, labelmates The Tremeloes, and their enjoyable debut album, *The Everlasting Love Affair*, which included a blistering take of Joe South's Hush – superior to Deep Purple's cover – was a surprisingly low seller.

Love Affair was not everlasting. Ellis sloped off before album two and entered into a curious, journeyman's career not unlike that of contemporary Terry Reid, where, through a mixture of poor guidance and confused capriciousness, plus some rotten luck, he failed to consolidate on the breaks he had and keep a grip on what he wanted, drifting through own band Ellis, B-list supergroup Widowmaker, solo albums, live albums and, finally, after an extended period away from music, an album guided by long-term fan Paul Weller.

With so many re-boots, missteps and record labels, only a superfan would have kept up with it all. But now his entire output has been gathered for *Finchley Boy* ★★★★ (Demon), a soul-boy's musical life-story across 10 CDs.

There's an impressive roll call of fellow travellers. Keith Mansfield arranged and produced Everlasting Love, follow-up Rainbow Valley, the stirring orchestral solo single Evie, written by Jimmy Webb, and got Ellis to front the busy soundtrack to the movie of Joe Orton's Loot. George 'Zoot' Money joined him in Ellis, their debut album, 1972's *Riding On The Crest Of A Slump*, produced by Roger Daltrey, being full of good stuff. A few years later, Luther Grosvenor lured Ellis into Widowmaker, a rock'n'soul outfit making a late attempt at duplicating the success of Humble Pie, who signed to Don Arden's Jet label and toured themselves into the ground.

In 1978, after another decent solo album, *The Last Angry Man*, with producers Dave Courtney and ex-Shadow Tony Meehan, went nowhere, Ellis, knocked sideways by the death of close friend Keith Moon and, noting how punk was altering the landscape, decided to bow out and get a job on the docks in Brighton. In the early '80s, he was just making his way back into music, when an accident with a forklift truck sliced both his feet in two. As you might imagine, that took some coming back from. He re-emerged properly in the 21st century, appearing at tribute concerts for his hero Steve Marriott and meeting Paul Weller, who in 2018 produced *Boom! Bang! Twang!* including covers of songs by William Bell and Tim Hardin.

"In 1968, Ellis became a 'dangerous' teenybop pin-up."

Assessing it all, the music from the early years stands out for its energy and Steve's raw promise, but the most recent track here, Just To Simplify, written, produced and accompanied by Weller, is just as affecting, albeit served at a lower temperature. There's a life of highs and lows gathered here to be discovered and, whatever it took him to do, Steve Ellis has every right to be proud of it.

Getty

Bright Eyes
★★★★

Fever And Mirrors/ Fever And Mirrors – A Companion

DEAD OCEANS. CD/DL/LP

Omaha trio's 'catalogue companion' series begins.

After Bright Eyes' 2020 reunion album, the reissue campaign for all nine predecessors serves to remind what an influence, and force of nature, frontman Conor Oberst was in those days. Starting with the debut *A Collection Of Songs Written And Recorded 1995-1997*, 1998's *Letting Off The Happiness* and 2000's *Fevers And Mirrors*: this is the point where Oberst's songwriting matured and arrangements broadened beyond initial scratchy Americana, though if anything his manic, sometimes histrionic presence doubled down – less bright- than bug-eyed. Five tracks from each album have been re-recorded with "talented friends" (plus one cover version "of the era") for separate EPs. Twenty-two years on, the revamps are understandably mellower, serving the song more than the singer. Four of *Fevers*' revamps feature backing vocals by Phoebe Bridgers, further sweetening the deal; though When The Curious Girl Realizes She Is Under Glass's quaking energy is left intact.

Martin Aston

Dennis Bovell
★★★★

The Dubmaster: The Essential Anthology

TROJAN/BMG. CD/DL/LP

Two-disc scoop of Barbados-born UK reggae titan's vast output as player, writer and producer.

His cameo in Steve McQueen's film Lovers Rock affirmed Dennis Bovell's pivotal role in the Black British cultural experience. Now *The Dubmaster* emphasises the unorthodox vision Bovell has brought to reggae, notably his foundational role in lovers rock, but also the under-acknowledged heft of his band Matumbi. The scope is impressive: 24 vinyl tracks, 38 on CD, divided between Bovell's own music and productions for others (including Errol Dunkley's sublime A Little Way Different), dub wizardry a constant. Naturally, Janet Kaye's DB-penned/produced Silly Games is here, and lovers lovers can smooch on to Marie Pierre's Our Tune, plus Bovell's own take on Caught You In A Lie, a 1975 single where Matumbi backed Louisa Marks. Matumbi's dread skills, meanwhile, are all over roots cuts like Blood Ah Go Run. The notable absence of material from his association with Linton Kwesi Johnson must surely beg a sequel.

Keith Cameron

Tape rolling: dub wizard Dennis Bovell at worky in 1978.

Dennis Morris/Camera Press

David M. Allen
★★★

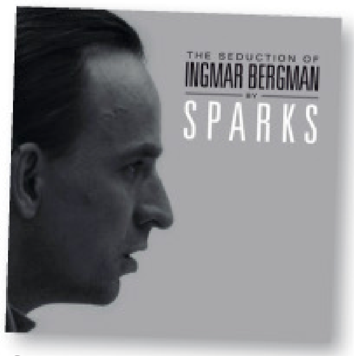
The DNA Of DMA

THEMSAY. DL/LP

Rookie engineer establishes electronic blueprint for Martin Rushent's Genetic Sound studio.

With his post-punk outfit Pinpoint in tatters, David M. Allen leapt at the chance of free recording time alone at Martin Rushent's studio in early 1981. The sleepless nights spent deciphering Roland's exorbitantly pricey and befuddling System 700 modular synth and MC-8 Micro Composer poured into the hi-octane New Romantic pop of Just A Combination and The Sound Of Muzak, packed with deep squiggling bass and reverbing drums. Allen's low alto voice, somewhere between Neil Arthur and Phil Oakey, excels amid The Dice Are Loaded's Cold War unease and Drowning In The Wave Of Dublife's stark separations. Ignore the nine-minute closer's discordant sonic muck-about, and the future Cure-producer's innate musicality and intuitive feel for arrangements shines through. It boded well for his next assignment: The Human League's epochal *Dare*.

Andy Cowan



Sparks
★★★★

The Seduction of Ingmar Bergman

LIL' BEETHOVEN. CD/DL/LP

LP #22: a fake 64-minute Nordic musical in which the titular Bergman frankly goes to Hollywood.

Of the 26 studio albums that comprise the extant Sparks pantheon-so-far, this painstakingly faked multilingual Swedish radio operetta is intended as one circular 64:32 sitting. We open at Cannes, 1956; Bergman, feted, is whisked by Russ and Ron to garish, red-carpet Hollywood, serenaded by Weimar piano, falsetto and the ersatz beat of T.V.O.D. by The Normal. It's the incorrigible duo's maddest musical theatre (available in English and Swedish, natch); Day Of The Locust meets The Archers, as commissioned by Sweden's Sveriges Radio. Falsetto-ing Russell self-satirises as passive-aggressive Muppet flunky while stentorian Euro-thesp Carl Jonas Malmsjö (who actually touched the hem of Bergman) mutters as only a befuddled cinematic giant might ("What am I doing here?"), drowned out by cop sirens. A final act is pure, overdone, pop-erratic Sparks ("You sure ain't going nowhere!"). An hour you'll be glad you spent.

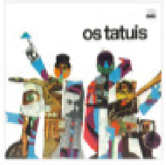
Andrew Collins

Os Tatuis
★★★

Os Tatuis

FAR OUT. CD/DL/LP

Tracing Brazilian trio Azymuth's bossa-jazz roots.



Brazilian jazz-funk trio Azymuth impacted internationally in the 1970s and '80s, their hit Jazz Carnival cracking the UK Top 20, but the story really starts in the mid-1960s, when prodigious keyboard player José Roberto Bertrami formed Os Tatuis with his brother Claudio on double bass, along with other local players. The group's 1965 self-titled debut has instrumental jazz takes of hits by Antônio Carlos Jobim, Vinicius De Moraes and Roberto Menescal, the lively Vivo Sonhando relayed with graceful feeling and Bertrami's organ firmly in the spotlight. Jazz arrangements of Menescal's Você and A Morte De Um Deus De Sal reveal the influence of Bill Evans and Dave Brubeck, and Bertrami's original A Bossa Do Ze Roberto makes clear that his virtuosity was already intact, as both pianist and composer. Everything is tastefully rendered, with hints of more adventurous work to come.

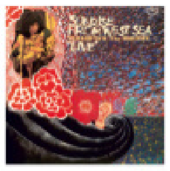
David Katz

Yamash'ta & The Horizon
★★★★

Sunrise From West Sea

WE WANT SOUNDS. CD/DL/LP

Revelatory Tokyo live performance from 1971.



Remembered primarily for his contributions to The Man Who Fell To Earth soundtrack and leading Go, the jazz-rock supergroup that contained Steve Winwood and Mike Shrieve, percussionist Stomu Yamash'ta began as a child prodigy in Japan. His breakthrough at the turn of the '70s led to him working with the Red Buddha touring company, showcasing his unique improvisational and irrepressible style. Recorded live at the Yamaha Hall, *Sunrise From West Sea* was released in Japan in 1971 – the original now commands enormous money – and it shows just how otherworldly and unsettling Yamash'ta could be at full pelt. Playing with violinist Takehisa Kosugi, Masahiko Satoh on electric organ and Hideakira Sakurai on koto and shamisen, these two lengthy improvised pieces may not be the easiest listen, but once the taste is acquired, *Sunrise From West Sea* is powerful, challenging and frequently beautiful.

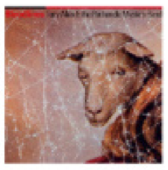
Daryl Easlea

Terry Allen
★★★★

Bloodlines

PARADISE OF BACHELORS. CD/DL/LP

The return of Texas country maverick's 1983 album.



It's not the first time Allen's fourth album's been reissued – Sugar Hill Records put it on a single CD that threw in his third album *Smokin' The Dummy*. But it's its first time on vinyl, remastered from the original tapes, with new photos and linernotes by his devotees at P.O.B. (They're giving the same loving archive treatment to *Smokin'*, which will come out separately the same day.) *Bloodlines* is up there with Allen's best: *Lubbock (On Everything)* (1979) and *Juarez* (1975); it actually revisits two songs from the latter. A song cycle with a dark/darkly comic take on religion, its best-known song is the glorious Gimme A Ride To Heaven Boy, where a driver gives a ride to a gun-toting, hitchhiking Jesus. Originally released on Allen's own Fate Records label, it was recorded in Lubbock with The Panhandle Mystery Band and produced by Lloyd Maines.

Sylvie Simmons

Carl Erdmann
★★★★
Bizzarrophytes
MORNING TRIP. DL/LP

US desert wanderer, with sitar, hits psych-folk gold.

Some obscure reissues feel so calculated to titillate cratediggers, it's easy to be sceptical about their provenance: can they truly be for real? Take this private press marvel, purportedly from 1980. The story suggests Carl Erdmann was working as a geologist in desert oil fields, carrying a sitar in his pickup truck and living in the UFO zone of Roswell, New Mexico. The guitar and sitar four-track jams he collected here are a varied bunch, recalling Windham Hill-era Robbie Basho, Ardent outlier Gimmer Nicholson, psychedelicised Sandy Bull (the outstanding Turritella Flats), Woodstock raga master Peter Walker and Ravi Shankar (Dhun, with added flute). It all hangs together, though, and the evidence suggests Erdmann is a genuine person, not the invention of some latterday acid-folk forger: on Discogs, an original copy of this lovely curio will set you back around £100.

John Mulvey

Various
★★★★
Garth Hudson Presents A Canadian Celebration Of The Band
CURVE MUSIC. CD/DL

North Americana all-stars interpret The Band book.

The Band were 4/5ths Canadian and this tribute by fellow citizens Neil Young, Bruce Cockburn, the Cowboy Junkies, country-rockers like Blue Rodeo and The Sadies and others was first released a decade ago. Their genius keyboardist Garth Hudson brings his wild inventiveness and founding-member cred to every cut. The music carries even more gravitas with time, a testament not only to The Band, but particularly to their controversial primary songwriter Robbie Robertson, whose contributions to rock history are immeasurable. Gems include Mary Margaret O'Hara's harrowing portrait of a woman unhinged by love in her extraordinary version of deep cut Out Of The Blue. And Great Big Sea's Pogues-esque Knockin' Lost John unearths the old, weird Canada inherent in this other lesser-known Robertson nugget. Unsurprisingly, Neil lights up Dylan/Rick Danko's This Wheel On Fire.

Michael Simmons

Various
★★★★
David Hepworth Deep 70s
DEMON. CD/DL/LP

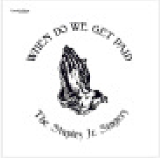
MOJO co-founder's deep dive into the dressed-down, double-denim decade.

Back in the '70s the kids had Top Of The Pops and their older brothers had The Old Grey Whistle Test and artisan brews of rock, blues, country and folk. Veteran author, broadcaster and MOJO co-founder David Hepworth has entertainingly curated a 71-track personal survey of the rich brown undergrowth germinated by The Band that thrived in the shade of the megasellers. Tasty madeleines abound – The Roches, McGarrigles, Bobby Charles, Andy Pratt and more – plus a smattering often forgotten for a reason: Sharks? Patto? Erm… As demonstrated by the dressed-down aesthetic surviving the new wave in the shiny silver shape of Dire Straits, even among rootsiness buffs artists had to be relatable. Thus, herein many more men than women, and blues-rock aplenty but only one black exponent, Freddie King. Music fans have since evolved for the better: let your ears, not your eyes, be the judge.

Mat Snow

Staples Jr. Singers
★★★
When Do We Get Paid
LUAKA BOP. CD/DL/LP

Rare 1975 gospel album from the recently re-formed Aberdeen, MS vocal group.



The Staples Jr. Singers were a family trio who formed in 1971 in Aberdeen, Mississippi. They were incredibly young when they started – leader Annie Brown [now Caldwell] was just 11; her siblings A.R.C. 12, and Edward 13. Named after their chief influence the Staple Singers, with other touchstones including Curtis Mayfield and Marvin Gaye, they sung gospel and of the civil rights struggle. By the time they recorded their sole album in Tupelo in 1975, they had recruited Ronnel Brown who was 10. Pressing just a handful of copies, they sold them at their shows and to neighbours from their front lawn. They clearly had gumption and their songs, switching from deadly solemnity to dancing-in-the-aisles jubilation, are testament to that.

Lois Wilson

Tony Hill
★★★★
Inexactness
BLUE MATTER. LP

First vinyl outing for 2001 solo LP by former High Tide/Misunderstood guitarist.

Tony Hill's guitar-playing has a liquid intensity which perhaps only J Mascis has managed to successfully emulate, while his voice – unusually smooth for a singer in the hard rock idiom – recalls Bid of The Monochrome Set. Put that unlikely combination together and what you get is a compellingly idiosyncratic album from one of British rock's most underrated performers. Matt Kelly's violin and viola playing are up there with High Tide's kick-ass fiddler Simon House, and with that band's former bass player Pete Pavli being helped out by Ade Shaw (ex of Hawkwind and more recently of The Bevis Frond) and Nick Saloman (never of Hawkwind), Hill's distinctive talent could not want for a more sympathetic setting. This album's epic 14-minute instrumental climax Of Foundries, Ships & Steeples conjures up the improbable (but delightful) spectre of Dave Swarbrick guesting on a Groundhogs John Fahey cover.

Ben Thompson

Charles Mingus: using his double bass like a weapon.

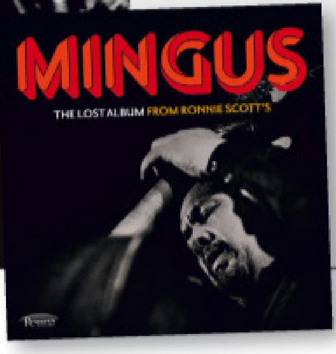
Jean-Pierre Leloir

Charles Mingus
★★★★
The Lost Album From Ronnie Scott's
RESONANCE. CD/DL/LP

Jazz legend's discarded live album finally materialises; a phenomenal discovery.

SEEKING TO prioritise jazz-rock and electric fusion, in 1973 Columbia Records jettisoned Mingus in a ruthless purge of its jazz roster. Although the bassist/composer had already readied his next album for the label, recorded on tour in London the previous year, it was canned and spent 50 years gathering dust. Now liberated from the archives, it proves a revelation. Just in terms of audio quality, it's undoubtedly one of Mingus's best ever live albums. The performances, too, are astounding. Using his bass like a weapon, Mingus imperiously steers his sextet – which includes a sensational 19-year-old Jon Faddis on trumpet – through the incendiary new tune Mind-Readers' Convention In Milano and revamped old favourites. Of the latter, Fables Of Faubus is the standout, transformed into a 35-minute epic distinguished by riotous tone colours and jostling group improv.

Charles Waring

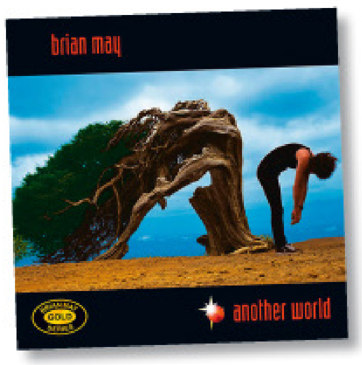


The Undertones
★★★★
Dig What You Need
DIMPLE DISCS. CD/DL/LP

Pick of the post-Feargal Sharkey re-formation years, remixed by Paul Tipler.

The Derry boys without Feargal Sharkey? Inconceivable! And yet in 1999 the O'Neill brothers with Mickey Bradley and Billy Doherty re-formed the group, replacing the original singer with their friend Paul McLoone. The ensuing live shows were thrilling (and still are), McLoone a rejuvenating force on-stage. Two subsequent LPs – 2003's *Get What You Need* and 2007's *Dig Yourself Deep* –meanwhile contain moments of sheer wonderment. Listen to the exuberant Thrill Me and Enough included on this well-chosen best-of the comeback era: both are classic pop-punk nuggets, all vocal vibrato gush, infectious melodies and joyous escape. Then try the sumptuous Winter Sun, a more mature-sounding outing *à la Positive Touch*, with its tender vocal and lavish harmonies.

Lois Wilson

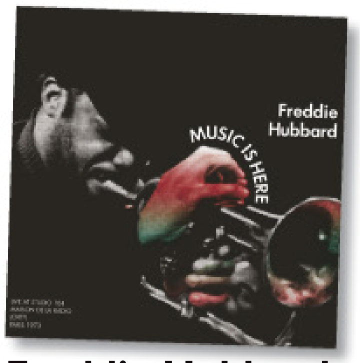


Brian May
★★★
Another World
EMI. CD/DL/LP/MC

Expanded, deluxe edition of Queen maestro's 1998 solo LP.

The 1990s were a challenging time for Queen. Brian May's second solo album pinwheels between chest-beating hard rock and contemplative ballads,and is revamped here with 15 bonus tracks. Jeff Beck jollies him along on The Guv'nor and Ian Hunter on a rousing cover of Mott The Hoople's All The Way From Memphis. But while May's Red Special and sixpence get a thorough workout, the songwriting is a tad thin and May sounds a bit lost. Drummer Cozy Powell (who died before *Another World*'s release) bludgeons through Business, with lyrics suggesting May pouring out his woes from a psychiatrist's couch. Tellingly, the standout ballad Why Don't We Try Again was deemed too personal for Queen, but would have been a welcome addition to their last Mercury album, *Innuendo*. Queen's AC/DC-loving guitar hero has always been a melancholy type, and both sides of his character are thrown into sharp relief here.

Mark Blake

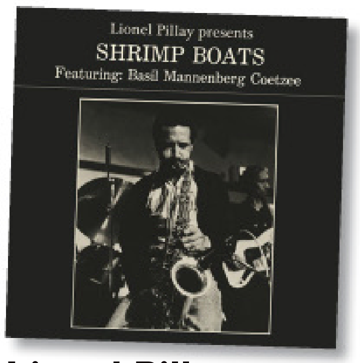


Freddie Hubbard
★★★★
Music Is Here – Live At Studio 104 Maison De La Radio Paris 1973
WE WANT SOUNDS. CD/DL/LP

An exhilarating live capture of an artist on flaming form.

In 1973, Freddie Hubbard was at the peak of his powers. He'd signed to Creed Taylor's CTI imprint, stretched further into fusion and was much in demand. He had won a Grammy in 1972 for *First Light*, and was touring to celebrate his recent album, *Sky Dive*. The four tracks on *Music Is Here* were recorded live with his recently formed quintet, and there is a road-honed telepathy at work. It can be heard in the bottomless groove of Povo with the escalating interplay between Junior Cook's sax and Hubbard's trumpet, and in the looseness of a doubled-in-length The Intrepid Fox from *Red Clay*. Hubbard plays throughout with glorious economy. Sky Dive is a masterclass, highlighting why Hubbard was so successful in bridging his roots in bebop with the Rhodes-driven funk-jazz of the '70s. *Music Is Here* is free-flowing, free-spirited spiritual jazz at its best.

Daryl Easlea



Lionel Pillay Featuring Basil Mannenberg Coetzee
★★★★
Shrimp Boats
WE ARE BUSY BODIES. LP

1987 compilation showcases South African pianist and Cape Town sax legend in perfect harmony.

Even when hope was a rare commodity during the apartheid era, Lionel Pillay and Basil Mannenberg Coetzee fought to make music on their own terms, in open defiance of the powers that be. Originally recorded in sessions for 1979's joint *Plum And Cherry* LP, the title track elaborates on Abdullah Ibrahim's 1971 arrangement, both parties twisting and testing the fluidity of its loping central refrain. Coetzee's pure tone and warm sound complement Pillay's unshowy approach as 25 minutes breeze imperceptibly by. While the second side's Pillay original Slow Blues For Orial is another horizontally laid-back treat, swinging covers of Mankunku's Yakhal Inkomo and Weather Report's Birdland fail to rival the main event.

Andy Cowan

COMING NEXT MONTH...

The Clash, Soccer Mommy (pictured), The Smile, Lloyd Miller, Fantastic Negrito, Sparks, King Crimson, UB40, Mavis Staples, Prince and more.

Sophie Hur

REISSUES EXTRA

? And The Mysterians
★★★
96 Tears
ABKCO. LP

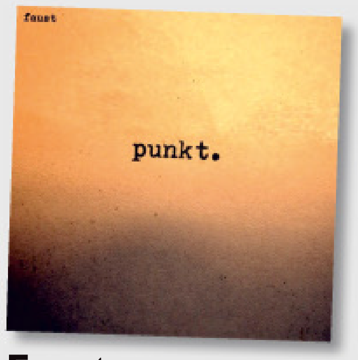
The Mexican-Detroit teens' 1966 LP, named for their hit debut 45: the garage rock classic affirmed by Lenny Kaye himself as "the truest Nugget". Another dozen coolly inconsequential songs run on outsider energy, basic, killer riffs and wobbly Vox organ. *JB*

África Negra
★★★★
Antologia Vol. I
BONGO JOE. CD/DL/LP

From the island of São Tomé, 50 years of AN's highly danceable hybrid of African styles (São Tomé rumba, Congolese soukous, Ghanaian highlife) and Portuguese legacy. It's wonderful stuff; mostly up-tempo, with phased guitars and a hip-swaying drag in its Cuban-informed grooves. *JB*

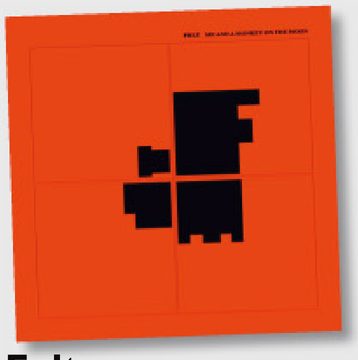
Bedhead
★★★★
Beheaded
NUMERO GROUP. LP

Originally on Trance Syndicate/ Rough Trade in 1996, the hard-to-find second LP by the Texan five-piece who combined Slint/ Codeine-schooled elephants and ants guitar dynamics with down-tempo indie, of a piece with the cerebral dirge of Galaxie 500 or early Low (as on the title track). *JB*



Faust
★★★★
Punkt.
BUREAU B. CD/LP

Unreleased until last year's box set, the original Faust's 1975 cataclysm united all their quantum strands, from unrestricted aural diabolism to the gentlest sensibilities. Chortlesome to reflect that they recorded it under false pretences and then got arrested (after hiding the tapes). *IH*



Felt
★★★★
Me And A Monkey On The Moon
CHERRY RED. CD

Country-style and autumnal in tone, in 1989 Lawrence reflected on youth, the '70s, departed guitar prodigy Maurice Deebank and more. Then Felt were gone, their legend assured. Part of a budget re-release of all 10 albums in wiggy new typographical sleeves. *IH*

Madness
★★★
Wonderful
BMG/ADA. LP

Originally released in 1999, Madness's first album in an age retained the old bounce (helped by original production duo Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley) – The Communicator beams in from *Step Beyond*-land – and with tragicomedy, booze, death and fatal fame in the mix it was par for the course, the Dark Stuff ever present. *IH*

The Studio 68!
★★★
The Total Sound
DETOUR. LP

Writer Paul Moody's late-'80s/ early-'90s Mod-scented combo were belatedly anthologised on 2014's ace *PortobelloHello*; *The Total Sound* completes the package with demos of unheard sparklers like Thirteenth Chime and Living In A World Of Your Own, overseas live recordings, and re-imagined 'lost' songs. *PG*

Van der Graaf Generator
★★★★
Pawn Hearts
UNIVERSAL. LP

Van der Graaf Generator's fourth album, from 1971, with songs of alienation, suicide and powerlessness over evil, operatic prog full of jazzy swing and murderous intent (the group split less than a year later). Now on deluxe vinyl, as are three other essential VdGG LPs. *IH*

Various
★★★
Super Bad...
DOCTOR BIRD. CD

Treasure Isle's Duke Reid ruled the rocksteady roost in the late '60s, but his quality control dipped somewhat with the rise of reggae, as this 50-track comp (from '71-73) attests. So you get The Melodians' gorgeously soulful Passion Love, but also Cynthia Richards' cloying take on Nat King Cole's Sentimental Reasons. A curate's egg. *SM*

RATINGS & FORMATS

Your guide to the month's best music is now even more definitive with our handy format guide.

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★★★★★ MOJO CLASSIC ★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★ GOOD ★★ DISAPPOINTING ★ BEST AVOIDED ☆ DEPLORABLE

Need for speed: rock'n'roll wild child Herman Brood, Paradiso, Amsterdam, November 19, 1977.

Getty

CREDITS

Tracks: Saturday Night / Dope Sucks / One / Doin' It / Champagne (& Wine) / Back (In Y'r Love) / Hit / R & Roll Junkie / Never Enough / Pain / Get Lost / Hot-Talk / Prisoners / Doreen / Skid Row

Personnel: Herman Brood (piano, keys, vocals) / Dany Lademacher (guitar)/ Freddy Cavalli (bass)/ Cees 'Ani' Meerman (drums) / Bertus Borgers (sax) / Bert Jansen (blues harp) / Robert Jan Stips (keys) / Monica Tjen A Kwoei / Dee Dee Dekkers / Josee van Iersel / Floor Van Zutphen (vocals)

Producer: Herman Brood & His Wild Romance, Robin Freeman (co-producer), Pierre Geoffroy Chateau (co-engineer)

Released: 1978

Recorded: Relight Studio, Hilvarenbeek, Netherlands

Chart peak: 8 (Dutch charts)

Available: streaming services

Live Injection

This month's lost artefact dredged from obscuria: the Rock & Roll Junkie from the Lowlands.

Herman Brood & His Wild Romance

Shpritsz

BUBBLE, 1978

'SHPRITSZ' IS a word of Yiddish origin which may be German slang for a hypodermic syringe. It could also signify ejaculate, high spirits, verbal riffing, or being squirted by a clown with a soda siphon. Herman Brood – hailed as 'The Most Famous Hard Drug User In The Netherlands' – would likely have been OK with any of these interpretations.

Born in Zwolle on November 5, 1946, the young Brood played rock'n'roll piano in The Moans, and picked up a taste for pills when playing American army bases in West Germany. After being kicked out of Neder-bluesers Cuby + Blizzards for drug use in 1969, he dropped out of music, later recalling stints in prison and mental institutions, opium smuggling in Israel and a career as a housebreaker. "I was completely into junk and crime," the William Burroughs-admiring Brood told Sounds' Phil Sutcliffe. "The success of a break-in was as satisfying as having a hit record."

He returned to music in the mid '70s and formed his Wild Romance band, named for a line from Lost Mind by his hero Mose Allison. The group's first line-up, which featured Focus's Jan Akkerman on guitar, would only manage 1977's *Street* before splintering. A new formation would follow, including Belgian guitarist Dany Lademacher. A regular collaborator, he's well placed to say how much of the myth of Brood is true.

"Actually, I never saw something in a magazine or on TV about him that was wrong," he says. "What you read about him was true most of the time – which makes it more terrifying. When I joined the band, it was like, 'Welcome to Hell!' Everything was possible and everything was exaggerated. But it was fantastic. He was, not a great singer, but he had something different. The real Herman was a bit of a shy, quiet guy, and sometimes very nice, yet he was definitely in love with the stage. He even told me himself, that's hard to analyse."

Shpritsz was recorded at Relight Studio, Hilvarenbeek, which Lademacher notes was formerly a porno movie studio (Brood approved). As the group, he recalls, played 310 shows that year, recording occurred in fits and starts, often in the middle of the night, with no more than a week of work in all. "The album's what we did live," says Lademacher. "Herman was quite easy to work with, but you're working with a guy who never sleeps and never stops working. Sometimes he didn't go to bed for four days, and when he did sleep he just turned off, like, boom! Herman sleeps. I'm amazed he had such a long life."

With 15 songs in 37 minutes, its full-pelt boogie, lowlands R&B and honking bar-room rock'n'roll recalls the contemporary output of Bruce Springsteen and Graham Parker, with shady Lou Reed junkie hassle thrown in. Prowling opener Saturday Night, with Brood's saliva-y jive talk of neon lights and cold dawns, is just one song dealing with the intravenous life: the nervous Doin' It, for example, speaks of speed-binge time-dilation, while the Stonesy R & Roll Junkie includes the fateful line: "When I do my suicide for you/I hope you miss me too." Elsewhere he boasts of having crabs and chewing gum in his pubes (Back (In Y'r Love)) and advises against following his example with the yabbering Dope Sucks.

Lademacher reflects, "It's not really obvious, but in the lyrics you can find that he was thinking about death quite a lot. It was something he always had with him. Nobody was thinking of that at the time, but it was there."

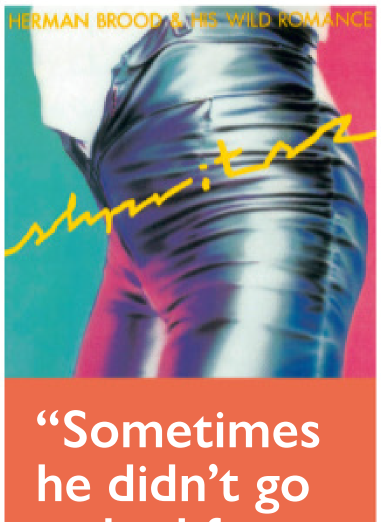
The augurs were, nonetheless, good after the LP's release: a hit at home, its single Saturday Night peaked at 35 on the US charts in September 1979. Shows including dates with The Kinks went down well, and that year Brood would also make his big-screen acting debut, alongside his then-girlfriend Nina Hagen, in crime/music caper Cha-Cha. Yet the movie would bomb, and Lademacher shudders when remembering a disastrous gig at the Bottom Line in New York. "The speed was finished and Herman had too much to drink," he says. "He just fell in the audience. We actually blew the fucking tour just because of that one night."

America would not be theirs and 1980's *Go Nutz* was also poorly received: thereafter, the official biography reports, "Wild Romance fell apart and Brood's career collapsed." Though he continued to record, he later found acclaim as a painter and was hailed as a curious type of national treasure (in the 1994 film Rock'n'Roll Junkie he is both filmed shooting up and singing with old ladies on the street in Amsterdam).

Eventually, the years of hard living – and, says Lademacher, too much booze and a misguided final attempt to get off speed for good – caught up with him. Believing the game was finally up, on July 11, 2001, Brood jumped off the roof of the Amsterdam Hilton. His suicide note, according to the Amsterdam city archives, read, "I don't feel like it any more, maybe I'll see you again. Make it a great party." His funeral cortège in the city was watched by thousands.

With musical tributes including Black Francis's 2007 concept piece *Bluefinger*, Brood has been commemorated in the Netherlands with museum and art exhibitions, films and documentaries, and even a series of commemorative coins. "You still find traces of Herman everywhere you see," says Lademacher, who continues to play with the reconstituted Wild Romance, whose tour manager is Brood's son Marcel. "Everyone loved him and he's still very much alive. He was like a child, you know, a difficult child. He was the bad guy, but that was his way to be the good guy."

Ian Harrison



"Sometimes he didn't go to bed for four days."
DANY LADEMACHER

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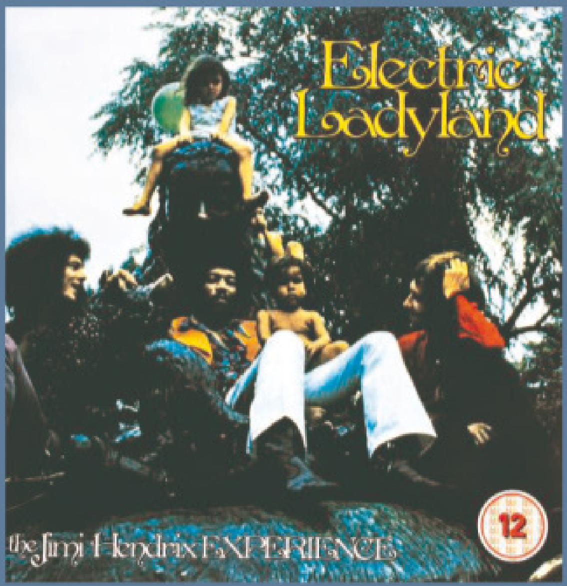

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Buttoning up: Gil Scott-Heron, "America's social conscience", in Birmingham, UK, 1975.

Gil Scott-Heron

The street sermoniser, 'bluesologist' and godfather of rap. By **Lois Wilson.**

AS AMERICA'S social conscience, Gil Scott-Heron spent his 40-plus-year recording career articulating injustice and inequality with poem-songs such as The Revolution Will Not Be Televised, Winter In America and B-Movie, hard-hitting, astute street sermons that pulsed with a militant energy. Yet as he put it to this writer in 2010, "I'm not a 24-hour news channel. Life is also full of fun, we fall in love, we laugh, we dance." Scott-Heron's music combined it all. Who else could also fill a dancefloor with a joyous-sounding yet scathing critique of South African apartheid called Johannesburg *and* deliver a hymnal about life itself as uplifting and positive as I Think I'll Call It Morning?

Scott-Heron's own story is as compelling as his art. Born on April 1, 1949 in Chicago, his father was Gilbert 'The Black Arrow' Heron, Celtic FC's first black professional footballer, and his mother Bobbie Scott was an opera singer who performed with the New York Oratorio Society. His maternal grandmother, Lily Scott, was pivotal in his artistic growth. A civil rights activist in Lincoln, Tennessee, she raised Gil until he was 12, introducing him to the piano, gospel music and the writings of Langston Hughes, one of his core influences. When she died, he moved to New York to live with his mother. Winning a scholarship to the elite Fieldston school in Riverdale, he discovered LeRoi Jones – AKA Amiri Baraka – another touchstone, before studying English at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, where Hughes had studied and where Scott-Heron met his key musical collaborator, the pianist and flute player Brian Jackson. It was Bob Thiele, the jazz producer, who suggested he record an album of his poetry over a rhythmic backdrop; the result was 1970's ground-breaking *Small Talk At 125th And Lenox*, the first of 15 studio albums and nine live recordings that mixed spoken-word dissension with funk, jazz and blues – he called himself a "'bluesologist'; a scientist who is concerned with the origin of the blues."

His later years were dogged by alcohol and substance abuse, and he spent time in prison for possession, but his 2010 comeback album, his first in 16 years, *I'm New Here*, was poignant and potent, and 2012's posthumous autobiography, The Last Holiday, insightful. Whittling his canon down to just 10 albums has been a nigh on impossible task: for many readers, the response is simply "buy the lot." Sound advice. But, in the meantime, here's your starter for 10.

> "His street sermons pulsed with militant energy."

CAST YOUR VOTES...

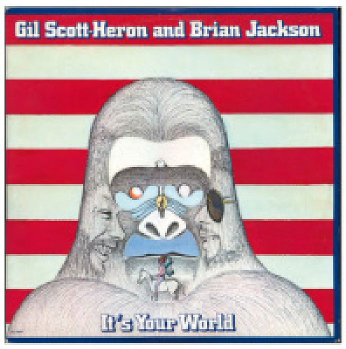
This month you chose your Top 10 Gil Scott-Heron LPs. Next month we want your Soul Jazz compilations Top 10. Send selections via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or e-mail to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk with the subject 'How To Buy Soul Jazz compilations' and we'll print the best comments.

10 Gil Scott-Heron
Small Talk At 125th And Lenox

FLYING DUTCHMAN, 1970

You say: "The beginnings of him fighting the power on record. The skeletal version of The Revolution… still shakes you to the core." Simone Collins, via Twitter

The cover artwork to Scott-Heron's Bob Thiele-produced debut, his first of three for Flying Dutch-man, introduced Gil as "A New Black Poet", the sleeve-notes declaring, "I am a Black man dedicated to expression; expression of the joy and pride of Blackness." Recorded live in front of an audience, his forceful proto-raps were beholden to The Last Poets, but, unlike the Poets, S-H, backed by three percussionists, himself on piano and guitar, threads his tenacious protests with wit and humour. Stand-outs include Whitey On The Moon and an early reading of The Revolution Will Not Be Televised.



4 Gil Scott-Heron And Brian Jackson
It's Your World

ARISTA, 1976

You say: "The perfect combination of live and studio. Gil Scott-Heron goes all out in the Bicentennial year." Andy Medhurst, via e-mail

Scott-Heron could occasionally be hit or miss in concert, but when he hit, he was out of this world. As borne out here on the live part of this seventh album, a double to boot, recorded at Boston's Paul's Mall on July 1 and 2, 1976. The performances witness Scott-Heron, Jackson and the Midnight Band at the top of their game on a series of improvised extended jams; a 13-and-a-half-minute rework of The Bottle and a 12-and-a-half-minute Home Is Where The Hatred Is bringing the house down and giving the original studio takes a run for their money.

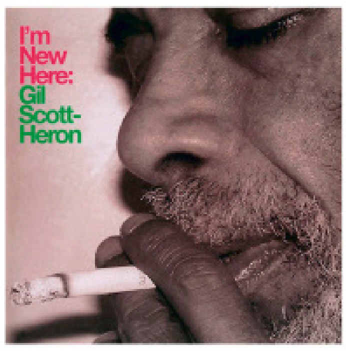
9 Gil Scott-Heron, Brian Jackson & Midnight Band

The First Minute Of A New Day

ARISTA, 1975

You say: "The first with his Midnight Band. It's funky, soulful, jazzy, bluesy, the culmination of a shared musical history." Emily Barnbrook, via Twitter

His fifth album, the first for Arista, and a bona fide jazz-funk classic. A major-label budget paid for a fuller sound – provided by the crack eight-piece jazz combo the Midnight Band – and a promotional push. The results gave Scott-Heron his first hit LP, reaching the US Top 30. But there was no let up. Jackson's musical direction remains on point; Gil's bite is just as ferocious, highlighted best on the spoken-word Nixon attack Pardon Our Analysis (We Beg Your Pardon) and the disconsolate Winter In America.



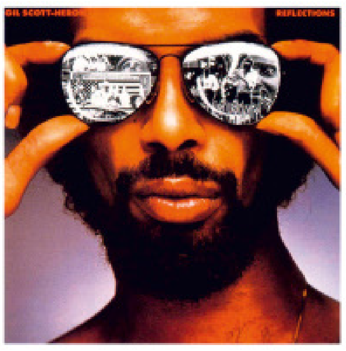
8 Gil Scott-Heron

I'm New Here

XL, 2010

You say: "His last stand. Although there is a lot of pain, there is also hope for a better future for the children." Brian Kettey, via e-mail

The last decade and a half had taken its toll; Scott-Heron, living out the grim realities of The Bottle and Angel Dust, battling addiction, and serving time in prison. You can hear the effect on his voice, no longer the pristine baritone, instead worn, almost threadbare on this Richard Russell-produced and conceived final album. Covers of Robert Johnson, Bobby Bland and Smog sound like they were made to tell his story. Erudite originals, meanwhile, are crushing in their finality, and inspirational too, spawning 2011's *We're New Here*, a remix album by Jamie xx and 2020's *We're New Again: A Reimagining By Makaya McCraven*.



7 Gil Scott-Heron

Reflections

ARISTA, 1981

You say: "B-Movie is sharp, incisive political commentary and still sounds uber-funky." The Invisible, via Twitter

Reeling from Brian Jackson's departure at the end of 1979, 1980's *Real Eyes* was a lacklustre affair. But with the election of Ronald Reagan to US president the following year, Scott-Heron had a new focus, and like a red flag to a bull went into full-on attack mode with *Reflections*. The most accomplished of his three Arista albums *sans* Jackson, its 12-minute closing track B-Movie is a genius piece that rips apart the parliamentary process: "Well, the first thing I want to say is, 'Mandate, my ass.'" It's not all rage and polemic though; a cover of Bill Withers' 1971 hit Grandma's Hands emanates warmth and compassion.

6 Gil Scott-Heron

Free Will

FLYING DUTCHMAN, 1972

You say: "The first Gil album I heard and its messages still resonate strongly today." Sunny Jones, via e-mail

Bringing his early years period to a close, this third and final Flying Dutchman outing captures the two sides of Scott-Heron. On side one he's simpatico with Jackson and a full band including flautist Hubert Laws, guitarist David Spinozza and drummer Pretty Purdie playing pensive soul-jazz; Did You Hear What They Said? is a moving evocation on Vietnam that aligns him to the great war poets, The Get Out Of The Ghetto Blues views slum living through a psychological lens. Side two, meanwhile, sets Gil's spoken word against percussion and occasional flute as he takes aim at police policy (No Knock) and celebrates John Coltrane (…And Then He Wrote Meditations).

5 Gil Scott-Heron And Brian Jackson

Bridges

ARISTA, 1977

You say: "*Bridges* shows how Gil could have been a classic jazz or soul singer had he wanted and been very successful doing it." June Briggs, via Twitter

With the disco era upon them, Scott-Heron and Jackson utilise Tonto, the synthesizer that had helped revolutionise Stevie Wonder's early-'70s work, and with producer Malcolm Cecil create an album of straight-ahead funk and two-step that fanfares Gil, the singer, his voice, deep, rich, utterly transfixing. For all its commercial appeal, its power remains undiminished, current events lending a lyrical stridency, its no-nukes messages, civil rights cries and peace-rally calls (We Almost Lost Detroit, 95 South (All Of The Places We've Been), Tuskegee #626 et al) still reverberating with a terrifying truth.

3 Gil Scott-Heron And Brian Jackson

From South Africa To South Carolina

ARISTA, 1975

You say: "Gil is unique. He makes you think *and* dance." Steve King, via e-mail

At his most prolific in the early to mid-'70s, Scott-Heron was averaging an album a year and 1975 saw two, with *The First Minute Of A New Day* (see Number 9) and this, which expands the political remit, with S-H (and Jackson and the Midnight Band) expressing the civil rights struggle within an international frame. The glorious disco-funk of Johannesburg is the apotheosis, a song about oppression delivered in a musical medium that promoted liberation and empowerment. At the other end of the musical spectrum, the nine-minute-plus Essex, penned by Midnight Band's Bilal Sunni-Ali, seeks cultural change through spiritual jazz transcendence.

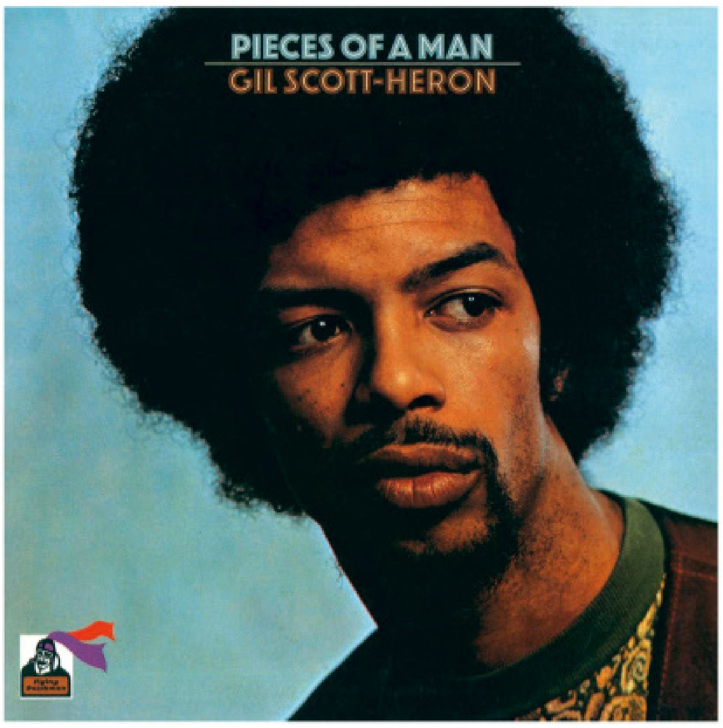
2 Gil Scott-Heron And Brian Jackson

Winter In America

STRATA-EAST, 1974

You say: "Gil at his most elegiac and poetic." Nicola Geddes, via Twitter

When Flying Dutchman refused to give equal billing to Jackson on his album sleeves, Scott-Heron moved on, and signing to Strata-East for this sole album got his wish. Initially titled *Supernatural Corner* and conceived as a soundtrack to the experiences of an Afro-American Vietnam vet returning home, *Winter In America* evolved into a more broad-brush probing of humanity's predicament. For the most part it's plaintive, intimate, scored by Jackson's gentle lapping of Fender Rhodes and piano, although The Bottle, Gil's empathetic detailing of the life of an addict, is irrepressible funk with Jackson's febrile flute blowing, and H^2Ogate Blues is a castigating live ad-lib.



1 Gil Scott-Heron

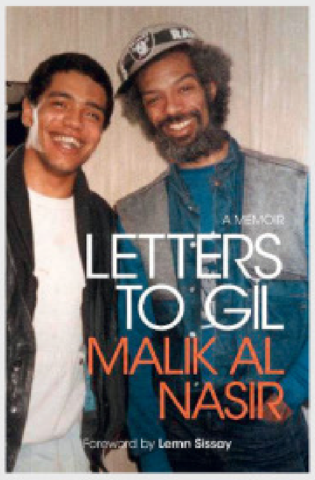
Pieces Of A Man

FLYING DUTCHMAN, 1971

You say: "Number 1 has to be *Pieces Of A Man*. One of the most important albums in the history of black American music." Dean Rudland, via e-mail

In the same year that Marvin Gaye recorded *What's Going On* and Sly & The Family Stone *There's A Riot Goin' On*, so Scott-Heron, just 22, delivered his masterpiece. His first with Jackson – who co-writes seven of the 11 tracks – it was recorded in New York's RCA studios with an expert band featuring Hubert Laws, Ron Carter and Bernard 'Pretty' Purdie. Scott-Heron is vociferous throughout and the high points are many and still cut deep today, from Home Is Where The Hatred Is, one of the bleakest portrayals of ghetto living ever written, to *the* definitive take on The Revolution Will Not Be Televised, his searing condemnation of consumerist society that promises redemption in the post-uprising, and Lady Day And John Coltrane, a celebration of the restorative power of music, the light that never goes out.

NOW DIG THIS



For many MOJO readers their introduction to Scott-Heron was through 1990's *Glory* (Arista), a 2-CD collection that still remains the best survey out there. For those who want more live Gil, you can't go wrong with 1990's *Tales Of Gil Scott-Heron* (Essential) which captures him in cracking form with the Amnesia Band in Europe. For a hands-on example of how Gil made a personal difference, Malik Al Nasir's Letters To Gil (above, Harper Collins) is the poignant memoir that traces Nasir's life-changing mentorship with the musician he met by chance. Also check out Robert Mugge's excellent 1982 part in-concert, part documentary film Black Wax (MVD Visual), capturing Gil as Washington DC tour guide and on-stage at the Wax Museum Nightclub.

Getty

More please: Peggy Lee, "warm, funny, entirely death-haunted".

Getty

78 Kids Forever

A subtly profound and wholly entertaining history of pre-rock pop. By **Danny Eccleston.**

Let's Do It: The Birth Of Pop

★★★★★

Bob Stanley

FABER & FABER. £25

LAMENTS THAT we are living in the Last Days Of Rock, or perhaps the Rock'n'Roll Era, are staples of the MOJO post bag. Yet as long as music is bought and sold, there will be Pop. Writer and Saint Etienne muso Bob Stanley – who has never seemed to set much store by 'rock' – takes the long view. In the geological span of pop, rock is a blip, and Stanley's latest book – which dares to tell the story of commercial music from roughly the 1890s to roughly the 1960s – gets deep into its strata.

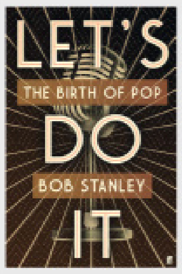
If Stanley's previous tome, the widely-admired Yeah Yeah Yeah, had a weakness it was that much of its ground was (for MOJO readers, at least) well-trodden. And though his take on the '60s, say, contained many priceless *aperçus* – the role of the end of National Service in the UK beat boom, for instance – and an effort was made to sprint past the more obvious signposts (The Beatles were afforded nine pages out of 700-odd) it was at its best when appraising the least 'cool' and most commercial – David Cassidy, or Tight Fit – where Stanley had the most original things to say.

Let's Do It may be the tougher sell – Franz Lehár? Bing Crosby? *Really?* – but it's the better book, because so many of its topics feel under-analysed and revelations – like the impact of 1907's British music hall strike – arrive on every page. Stanley is great at nailing what made artists like Crosby popular but also timeless. His chapter on Peggy Lee is a door swinging open on a rich and rewarding catalogue that ends with the quirky genius of Is That All There Is. Exemplifying his feel for what is multi-dimensional in even the poppiest pop, Stanley calls the record "warm, funny and entirely death-haunted".

"He alights on early pop pathfinders as eccentric as any Phil Spector."

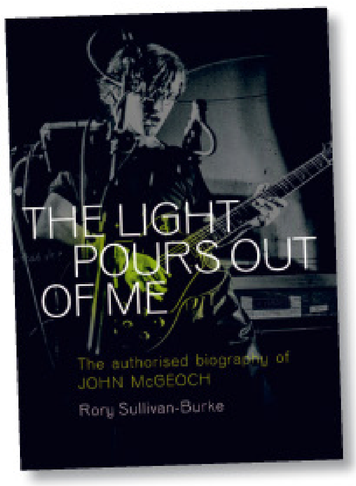
Along the way, he alights on early pop pathfinders as eccentric as any Phil Spector, such as Mercury's Mitch Miller: "the Willie Wonka of the recording studio" who delighted in novelty – "steam whistles, harpsichords, calliope" – while crafting '50s hits for Vic Damone and Guy Mitchell. Meanwhile, changing tech – recordings usurp sheet music and the parlour piano; radio challenges the dance hall; LPs introduce elevated notions such as theme and mood – are understood as revolutions in content as much as delivery.

Ultimately, Stanley shows how even challenges to pop are transformed into more pop – sometimes almost instantly. This time, when The Beatles enter his story, they are as much fodder as phenomenon – a flavour the pop biz learns to slather on anything. Let's Do It ends with a magisterial chapter on the pop tradition's resurgence in the '70s that emphasises an ongoing theme: that the story of popular music is as much one of continuity as of cultural "rupture". In this it resembles not the music book that Yeah Yeah Yeah was likened to in these pages – Alex Ross's 20th-century classical survey The Rest Is Noise – but Dave Marsh's unbeatable The Heart Of Rock & Soul, an empathetic and deeply catholic celebration of the "1001 Greatest Singles Ever Made" that rated Cyndi Lauper alongside The Seeds. It almost makes you want to be less of a rock snob. Almost.



WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- Irving Berlin, the writer of White Christmas (1937), among hundreds of still-classic songs, rarely celebrated Christmas. His baby son, Irving Jr, died on Christmas Day, 1928.
- The very first music publisher to set up on Manhattan's storied Tin Pan Alley were M. Witmark & Sons in 1893. Seventy years later they signed up a promising young songwriter called Robert Zimmerman.
- The gramophone and radio set were instrumental in interesting men in popular music. Before that, women drove music appreciation as amateur players and as active listeners (in 1922, 75 per cent of American concert goers were still female).



The Light Pours Out Of Me

★★★

Rory Sullivan-Burke

OMNIBUS PRESS. £20

Authorised biography of Magazine/Banshees/Armoury Show/PiL guitar magus John McGeoch.

"Guitar-playing isn't escapism for me… it's a responsibility." So said John McGeoch in April 1981, the point where his transformative impact upon Siouxsie & The Banshees was about to explode with *Juju*, an album defined by McGeoch's uniquely selfless form of guitar heroism. Perhaps this commitment to the collective explains how one of his generation's most influential musicians had slipped from view long before his untimely death in 2004. Through many new interviews with friends, fans, peers, family members and bandmates (the one notable absentee: John Lydon), Rory Sullivan-Burke portrays a conflicted man, torn between the ambition that saw him quit Magazine upon release of the band's best album, and a shyness compounded by addiction to alcohol. Although the text could have benefited from a tighter edit, the author's empathy and passion are true to McGeoch, who seems to have enhanced everyone he worked with. As Dave Formula simply says: "You couldn't replace him."

Keith Cameron

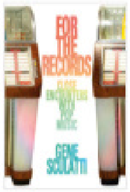
For The Records: Close Encounters With Pop Music

★★★★

Gene Sculatti

SWINGIN' 60 PRODUCTIONS. £12

A memoir of one expert's passion for collecting music.



Few cultural historians can match Gene Sculatti's small 'c' catholic tastes that have established him over a half-century as the small 'p' pope of pop. MOJO readers will understand his obsessive-compulsive attitude towards discovering and purchasing music; the thrill of first hearing the sounds that change one's life. The "pop music lifer" is a Baby Boomer and his experience reflects that, bemoaning the passage of '60s rock "when newness seemed to rain down almost weekly" and he praises punk's effect as a "defibrillator" on a patient dying of corporate overdose. Yet he's not imprisoned by counterculture, digging MOR (the Baja Marimba Band gets a shout-out) and he waxes enthusiastic about Freestyle dance-pop ("Madonna-be's") and Barenaked Ladies. Filled with playful asides (an exaggerated response to a Beach Boys album is "fan overboard"), Sculatti's modus operandi is to keep open ears and keep having fun.

Michael Simmons

The Sound Of Being Human: How Music Shapes Our Lives

★★★★

Jude Rogers

WHITE RABBIT. £16.99

Music makes up our minds: an investigative memoir for us all.

If all art aspires towards the condition of music, that's because music helps wire us to start with, innate to the very condition of being human. Such is MOJO writer Jude Rogers' thesis which considers the neuroscience of music in linguistic development, pattern recognition, emotional attachment and empathy through the tightly focused lens of her own life, from foetus to childhood and teens, education, friends, relationships, career, marriage, pregnancy, parenthood and bereavement. Structured as a mixtape linking life events to their soundtracks, like music itself this blend of memoir and investigation modulates through tempi and keys. Yet even when waxing lyrical and deeply personal, Jude Rogers connects to the bigger symphony of research mapping the brain and its processes as it develops and changes. ABBA meets the amygdala and Toots And The Maytals lively up the anterior cingulate cortex in a fascinating read which, far from reducing music, enriches it.

Mat Snow

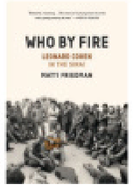
Who By Fire: Leonard Cohen In The Sinai

★★★

Matti Friedman

SPIEGEL & GRAU. £20

Field Commander Cohen entertains the troops in the Yom Kippur war.



In October '73 Leonard left Suzanne and baby Adam to go to Israel and offer himself as a volunteer. Stories vary as to what he intended, but he wound up part of an ad hoc troupe of performers who drove to the frontline in a truck, headlights doubling as spotlights, to play for small groups of soldiers wherever they found them. Though Cohen had an audience in Israel, this drew very little press. Friedman has gathered detailed stories and photos from many who were there. As to why he was there, excerpts from Cohen's unpublished notebooks present him as a "refugee" from domestic life in his "myth home", and it freed him up to write a new song, Lover Lover Lover. An engaging story, but what would have made this short book more essential is a bigger picture of Cohen's deep and enduring interest in war in his life (remember Cuba, 1961?) and work.

Sylvie Simmons

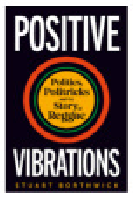
Positive Vibrations: Politics, Politricks And The Story Of Reggae

★★★★

Stuart Borthwick

REAKTION. £20

Examining the uneasy relationship between music and politics in Jamaica.



In this accessible exploration of reggae, Liverpool-based academic Borthwick demonstrates how Marcus Garvey's pan-Africanist vision of Black self-determination spurred the rise of Rastafari in Jamaica, dissecting the complex connections between Jamaican performers and the emergent state, and particularly focusing on the tense power dynamics that drove local conflicts during the Cold War era. Identifying reggae's impact on the UK's punk, post-punk and 2-Tone movements, Borthwick then analyses the female experience of dancehall and that subgenre's homophobic culture, before examining Jamaica's 2020 'Dubplate Election', its results allegedly influenced by sound system acetates specially commissioned by MPs from either side of the island's political divide. Stronger on background social context than the specificities of music production, Positive Vibration nevertheless offers much for reggae fans, as well as post-colonial scholars.

David Katz

Wayward: Just Another Life To Live

★★★★

Vashti Bunyan

WHITE RABBIT. £16.99

One of cult pop's legendary journeys. Less idyllic than it sounded…

The myth of getting it together in the country is always compelling, and few records have conjured the lure of escape better than Vashti Bunyan's *Just Another Diamond Day*. But one of the many impressive things about Bunyan's memoir is how the romance of her endeavour – abandoning a music career in 1968 to head to the Outer Hebrides by horse-drawn caravan – is balanced with the grimmer realities of an arduous and probably ill-advised trip. There is a somewhat counterintuitive plan to get the horse pregnant mid-trek. One of the dogs chases a flock of sheep off the edge of a cliff. Cold, hunger and prejudice are more or less constant companions. Whether or not you know Bunyan's airy, delicate records, it makes for a gripping read, though she writes well about music biz expediencies and cruelties, too. And there's a happy ending of sorts: a thwarted talent, shorn of confidence, eventually reconciled to the brilliance of her art.

John Mulvey

Vashti Bunyan: a diamond in the rough.

Rex

FILTER SCREEN

Quiet, please, genius at work: Ennio Morricone – a uniquely gifted composer.

Sprawling and enthralling

Expansive doc unpacks the creative enigma of the late, great Morricone. By **David Sheppard.**

Ennio: The Maestro

★★★★★

Dir. Giuseppe Tornatore

DOGWOOF/PIANO B PRODUZIONI. C/ST

THERE'S A telling disclosure midway through Giuseppe Tornatore's compelling, 156-minute tribute to the globally renowned Italian soundtrack eminence. It concerns director Pier Paolo Pasolini who, we learn, had only ever used J.S. Bach compositions in his films before recruiting Morricone to score his 1966 neo-realist feature, Hawks And Sparrows. After that, Pasolini dispensed with Bach – the implication being that he had found his living equivalent.

Such lofty veneration is a hallmark of Ennio: The Maestro, with its eclectic parade of talking heads – everyone from Bernardo Bertolucci to Clint Eastwood and Bruce Springsteen – dishing out lavish encomiums for the uniquely gifted Roman composer. In marked contrast, Morricone's own recollections (largely harvested from an 11-hour interview Tornatore conducted shortly before the composer's passing in 2020) are couched in humility, often interspersed with beguiling, whisper-sung melodic fragments from his 500-plus soundtracks.

Born in 1928, Morricone's life story has an aptly cinematic arc. Initially a trumpeter, like his father, when he began arranging for movies in the mid-'50s, he eschewed parts for the instrument so as not to offend papà, such was the meagre repute of film music in Italy – an irony, the composer observes, given his later predilection for corrida bugles in his scores for Sergio Leone's spaghetti western epics. Even as a contracted studio arranger for RCA Victor, Morricone initially worked under a pseudonym, fearing the censure of his conservatory tutor, the austere composer Goffredo Petrassi.

He would keep a toe in academic music, notably with the John Cage-inspired Gruppo Di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza, whose innovative spirit duly informed Morricone's 1960s *oeuvre* – from the symphonic melodrama of Mina's hit single Si Telefonado (about which the composer offers a lesson in minimalist theory begetting maximalist pop thrills) to the disorienting *musique concrète* soundtrack for Marco Bellocchio's Fists In The Pocket. Similarly inventive music for Investigation Of A Citizen Above Suspicion, Elio Petri's celebrated 1970 satire, so impressed Stanley Kubrick that he sought out Morricone to score A Clockwork Orange, a plan scuppered by the over-possessive Leone, who warned Kubrick off, saying, falsely, that the composer was still working on his A Fistful Of Dynamite. "It's my only regret about a movie that I didn't work on", Morricone laments.

Elsewhere, we get fascinating glimpses into the genesis of masterpiece scores for the likes of Once Upon A Time In America, The Mission and Tornatore's own Cinema Paradiso, while, amidst a torrent of film, TV and in-concert clips, a conveyor belt of eminent cineastes, from Quentin Tarantino to Wong Kar-Wai, build the case for Morricone's genius. Italian director Roberto Faenza even proposes that Morricone "may be the inventor of film music". All of which makes the slight, bespectacled, nonagenarian composer, who is the still centre of this enthralling homage, seem even more miraculous.

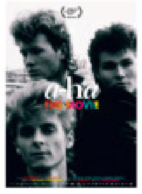
A-ha: The Movie

★★★

Dir: Thomas Robsahm

MODERN FILMS. C/ST

Norwegian pop heroes hunt high and low for the bright side.



"We let ourselves be photographed in the most humiliating settings," says A-ha's keyboardist Magne Furuholmen, reflecting on the intense fame that followed 1985's global hit Take On Me. The Oslo trio never craved teen adoration, their early love of Uriah Heep and Queen broadening into The Velvet Underground and – after a grotty stint in early-'80s London – The Batcave and Soft Cell (singer Morten Harket went through a phase of replacing hairspray with house paint.) This slightly sour documentary highlights other faultlines – creative differences, old resentments, recurrent stalemates – while John Barry found them so unyielding on James Bond theme The Living Daylights he called them "Nazi Jugend". If the Take On Me video turned them into a cartoon band, here A-ha are oddly unanimated, leaving the bleak impression that 50 million sales and an enduring career haven't stopped the feeling that something, somewhere, went awry.

Victoria Segal

All I Can Say

★★★★

Dir: Shannon Hoon, Danny Clinch, Taryn Gould, Colleen Hennessy

BULLDOG FILM. C/ST

Blind Melon singer Shannon Hoon films his rise and tragic fall, 1990-1995.

"You are the only person I have to talk to", Hoon says to hand-held camera, and the obsessive, extended selfie he shot until the day he died of a cocaine overdose, aged 28, speaks of a deep need partially wrought by his parents' break-up. Clever editing of Hoon's shaky archive also makes this a valuable and compelling time capsule. We witness his big break singing BVs for a youthful Guns N' Roses, watch him process Kurt Cobain's death in real time, and wince at Hoon's pain when a journalist calls Blind Melon, famous only for MTV smash No Rain, "one-hit wonders". From shaving his eyebrows off to alcohol and heroin benders, portents of the troubled singer's demise deepen over time; heartbreaking given his failed rehab attempts and obvious love for his girlfriend Lisa and their daughter, Nico Blue.

James McNair

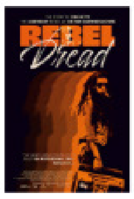
Rebel Dread

★★★★

Dir: William E Badgley

HINDSIGHT MEDIA. ST

Fascinating portrait of a Zelig of the '70s.



Despite being the butt on social media of unkind jibes (envious?) about his ready availability whenever a punk doc is made, as this profile makes clear Don Letts walked it then like he talks it now. He occupies a unique position in British culture, weaving a path that begins with *Tommy*-era Who, takes in soul, racism, Rasta, Lou Reed, being a confidant of Strummer and Lydon, hanging with Bob Marley, his legendary Beatles collection… "He was into that Bowie shit," says big brother Desmond dismissively. "I was never this choosing-sides guy," he counters. Much is made, rightfully, of the importance to his cultural mobility of girlfriend Jeannette Lee – "She just plain outgrew me" – but it's Letts' ability to always find his own angle that endears him to one and all. His closing words here should be our mantra.

David Hutcheon

Studio 666

★★★★

Dir: BJ McDonnell

SONY PICTURES UK. C/ST

Foos' tongue-in-cheek horror-comedy: released before the untimely death of Taylor Hawkins.

From its title all the way through to its execution, Dave Grohl's latest cinematic venture is a gloriously unpretentious one, in which Foo Fighters – playing themselves with acute self-deprecation – decamp to a mansion overpopulated with eldritch phenomena to record a new LP. Possession, murder and bouts of cannibalism ensue. Suffice to say, the film takes itself seriously for zero of its 106 minutes and, while its innate playfulness will alienate some, its gleeful commitment to its own escalating farce is precisely why it works so well. A shorter cut would have sharpened its impact further, but supercharged as it is by Grohl's charisma, and some preposterous levels of gore, this turn of the screw(ball) comedy can be notched up as a victory. While on a serious note, Hawkins' energy and irreverence are captured perfectly here.

George Garner

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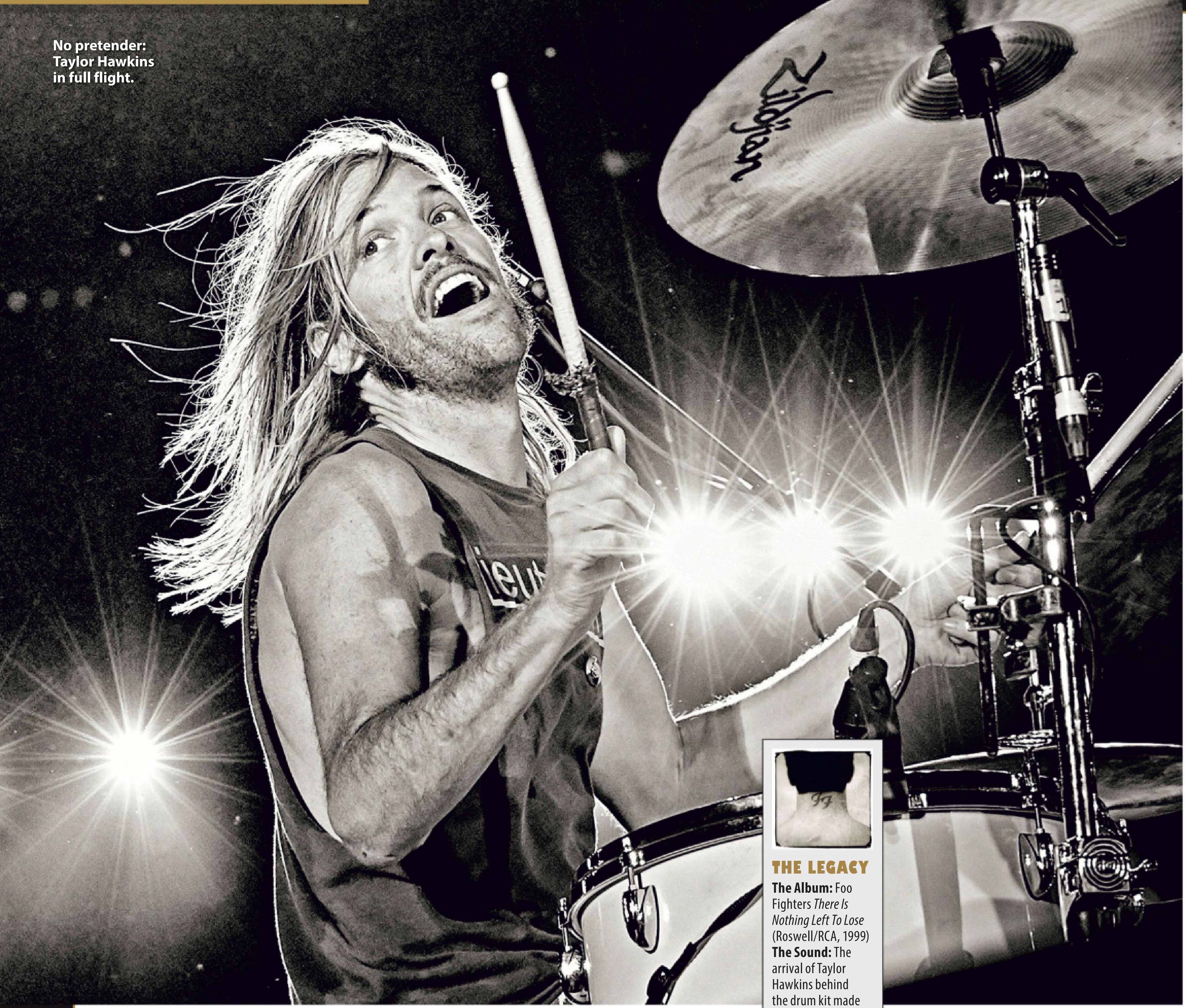


No pretender: Taylor Hawkins in full flight.

The One

Foo Fighters drummer **Taylor Hawkins** died suddenly on March 25 in Bogotá, Colombia.

FOR TAYLOR HAWKINS, being the drummer in the Foo Fighters was the best job in the world. Before he landed the gig in 1997, he'd been a huge fan of Dave Grohl's largely solo-recorded, self-titled debut album, released two years before.

"Oh my God, I was fucking in love with it," Hawkins enthused to MOJO two years ago in Los Angeles. "I'd just joined the Alanis Morissette band and we were having a fucking blast, man. Our soundtrack in the van was the Foo Fighters record."

Grohl famously wasn't happy with the recorded contributions of the band's then-drummer, William Goldsmith, to the second Foo Fighters album, '97's *The Colour And The Shape*, replaying most of the rhythmic parts himself. Goldsmith duly quit. Grohl called Hawkins (who he'd met on the touring circuit) for advice on a good replacement. Hawkins volunteered his services.

Charismatic, good-looking, hyperactive and prodigiously talented, Hawkins brought propulsive energy to the Foo Fighters on 1999's *There Is Nothing Left To Lose*, the first of his eight studio albums with the band. As a musician, he was someone who absolutely threw himself into every drum take and live performance. At the same time, he shared a brotherly closeness with Grohl. "My job in this band is to play drums," he told MOJO in 2020, "and sing some backup vocals here and there, and make Dave laugh."

> "My job is to play drums, sing backup vocals and make Dave laugh."
> TAYLOR HAWKINS

Born Oliver Taylor Hawkins in Fort Worth, Texas, on February 17, 1972, he was raised in Laguna Beach, California, after moving there at the age of four. Growing up, his favourite drummers were Roger Taylor and Stewart Copeland, notably two powerful players who always had a musical ear for enhancing a song. In the early '90s, Hawkins became a drummer-for-hire, working with British-born, Canadian hard rock blues singer Sass Jordan ("So I didn't have to do lawns and stuff," he recalled), before his break came in '96, backing Alanis Morissette on-stage during an 18-month world tour.

Hawkins' talents however stretched beyond the drum stool, as showcased by his in-turns gutsy and tender lead vocal on Cold Day In The Sun from the Foos' 2005 album *In Your Honor*. If he often seemed the archetypal Californian rock drummer, with his physical similarities to the Beach Boys' Dennis Wilson, it was a likeness brought into sharp focus in 2008 when Hawkins sang Holy Man over a previously unfinished 1977 backing track on the reissue of Wilson's classic *Pacific Ocean Blue*.

Following his reported "cardiovascular collapse" and death in a Bogotá hotel room during a Foo Fighters tour of South America, tributes to the much-loved musician and character flooded in from Ringo Starr, Elton John, Stevie Nicks and – most poignantly – Brian May and Roger Taylor of his beloved Queen. "Taylor, you were family to us," wrote May. "We will miss you so bad."

Tom Doyle

THE LEGACY

The Album: Foo Fighters *There Is Nothing Left To Lose* (Roswell/RCA, 1999)
The Sound: The arrival of Taylor Hawkins behind the drum kit made the Foo Fighters a band complete on their third album, recorded in a basement studio in Dave Grohl's house in Alexandria, Virginia. Hawkins' dynamic range was in full evidence, with his thunderous contributions to Breakout and Learn To Fly sitting alongside the pop pulse of Aurora, his favourite Foos song.

Thomas Rabsch/LAIF

Honky-tonk woman: Bobbie Nelson.

Don Craine

Downliners Sect singer and rhythm

BORN 1945

Much of the visual impact of British beat legends Downliners Sect lay in rhythm guitarist Don Craine, not least for his ever-present deerstalker hat. Craine shared lead vocals with bass player Keith Grant, and extended his instrumental skills to tambourine, maracas and autoharp.

The group was formed by Craine – then Mick O'Donnell – at Gunnersbury Grammar School, West London, and operated simultaneously as Geronimo and The Apaches until early 1963 when, on encountering The Rolling Stones, Craine said he "experienced a road-to-Damascus moment. They were my age – and set to make it as pop stars on their own terms. Thus the Sect's 40 per cent R&B went up to nearly 100 per cent." Their own following was to include Rod Stewart and Steve Marriott – who each volunteered services on harmonica – plus Van Morrison, so enraptured by the Sect that he quit the Irish showband scene and formed Them, and David Bowie.

Via an arguably over-developed sense of humour, however, the Sect would also explore Screaming Lord Sutch terrain with the revoltingly amusing I Want My Baby Back on '65's The Sect Sing Sick Songs EP, and the same year's C&W novelty May The Bird Of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose. Hits were not forthcoming. While they reached the Swedish Top 10 with a cover of The Coasters' Little Egypt, a 1967 single attributed to 'Don Craine's New Downliners Sect' signalled disbandment.

Rallying, Craine functioned in a duo, Finnegan's Wake, before hosting Hounslow's Grail Folk Club until a reconstituted Sect found a place in the 1976 pub rock sun, and were esteemed too in the subsequent punk explosion. They also enjoyed an enduring second coming as recording artists – releases including 1996's *Deerstalking Men*, a collaborative album with Billy Childish and friends billed as Thee Headcoat Sect – which, smiled Don, "continued to provide me with an escape from a lifetime of hard work." Poignantly, he posthumously appeared on BBC One's Antiques Roadshow in March, where he remembered the "magical" days of R&B at Eel Pie Island in the early '60s.

Alan Clayson

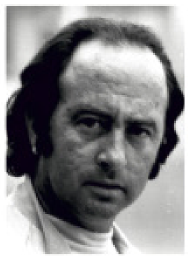
The cat in the hat: Downliners Sect's Don Craine.

Courtesy Bill Cooper American Recording, Shutterstock, Alamy

Richard Podolor

Producer

BORN 1936



Born in Los Angeles, Richard Podolor started as a singer, but ultimately carved out his reputation in the backrooms of American pop. An early (uncredited) co-write was drummer Sandy Nelson's 1959 US Top 5 smash Teen Beat: as a guitarist, Podolor assisted in the birth of surf rock when he led Richie Allen & The Pacific Surfers. Running his independent American Recording Co studio in Hollywood, he would engineer sessions by The Monkees, Electric Prunes and Donovan before producing Steppenwolf's and Three Dog Night's signature hits. From hard rock (Iron Butterfly) to country rock (The Dillards), there were few genres that evaded him through the '60s and '70s, while rock's heavy hitters (Don Henley, Heart, Tom Petty, Fleetwood Mac) hired his facilities in the '80s. Three Dog Night singer Danny Hutton recalled Podolor selflessly teaching him how to produce, adding that his friend had, "the best ears of anyone I've ever met".

Martin Aston

Bobbie Nelson

Little Sister

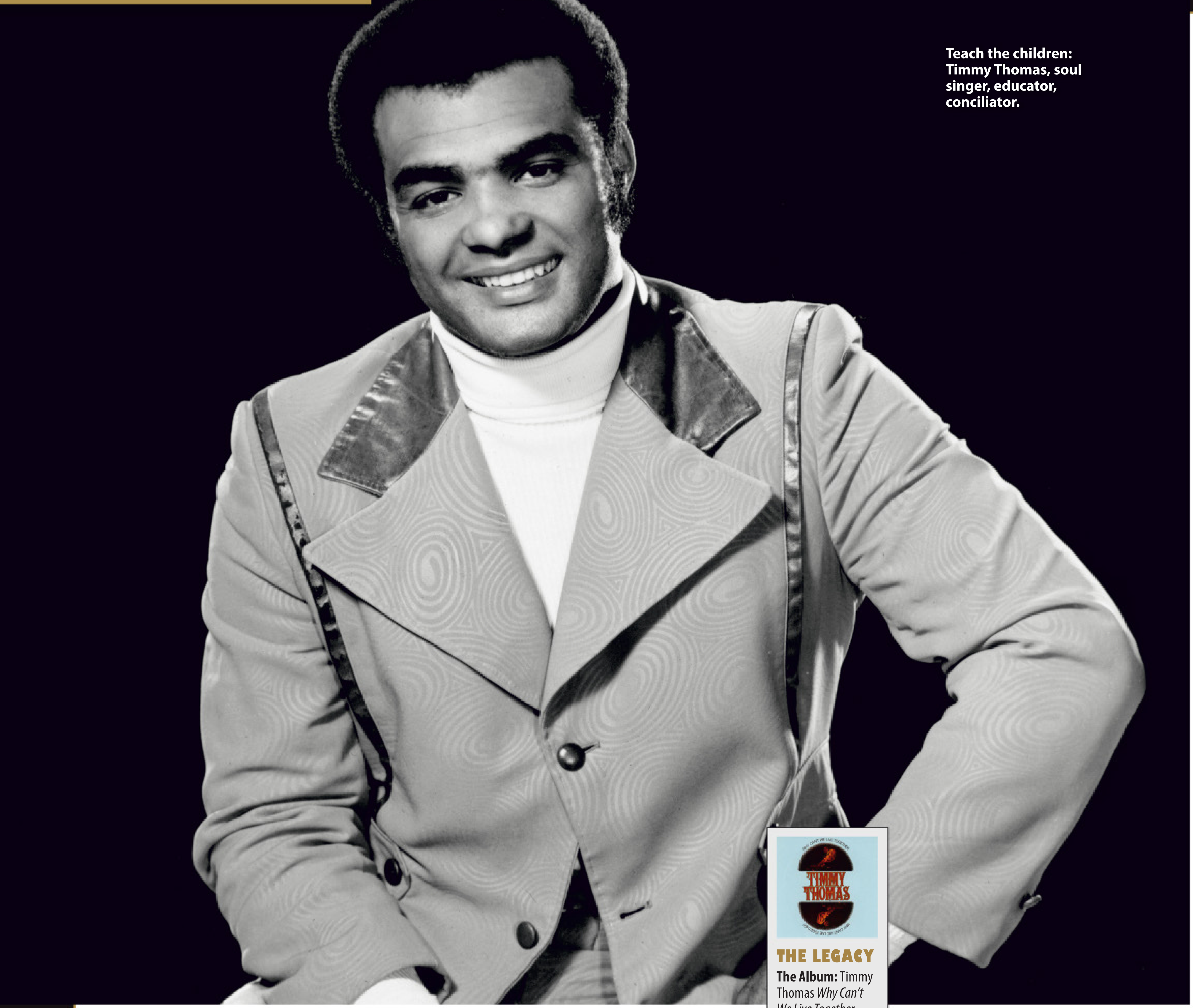
BORN 1931

The singer and piano player Willie Nelson called 'Little Sister Bobbie' was actually his big sister – a role she took seriously on-stage and off. Born in Texas two years before Willie, she was, he said, "the most naturally talented of all the Nelsons". At age five she was playing a pump organ in church. At 14 she toured with a travelling preacher. At 16 she played piano in her husband's band, Bud Fletcher & The Texans, getting her 14-year-old kid brother the job as guitarist. For the last half-century, Bobbie toured with Willie on his never-ending tour – they shared a bus – and played on numerous albums, her melodic honky-tonk piano an important part of the Family Band sound. In 2007, Bobbie released her debut solo album, *Audiobiography*, the same year she was inducted into the Texas Music Hall of Fame.

Sylvie Simmons

"Bobbie was the most naturally talented of all the Nelsons."

WILLIE NELSON



Teach the children: Timmy Thomas, soul singer, educator, conciliator.

He Came In Peace

Indiana soul man Timmy Thomas, who asked Why Can't We Live Together, left us on March 11.

USING JUST his Lowrey organ and its built-in drumbox as accompaniment, Timmy Thomas delivered one of the most quietly authoritative peace and racial unity anthems of the 20th century. Why Can't We Live Together, which captured the US anti-war mood of the time, also provided Thomas with his first hit record when it reached the US R&B Number 1, pop Top 3 and UK Number 12 in February 1973.

Thomas, a music teacher, was preparing lessons when he came up with the idea for the song in '72. "Walter Cronkite's report on the Vietnam war came on and when I heard the death toll, it was heartbreaking," he related to MOJO 40 years after the event. "I said to myself, Why can't we live together? And there it was."

One of 12 siblings, Evansville, Indiana's Timothy Earle Thomas was born on November 13, 1944, the son of a minister, and got his first break at 10 playing organ in his father's church. At 13, he helmed his first jazz band, then at 18 won a scholarship to the Stan Kenton jazz clinic at Indiana University where his tutors included Cannonball Adderley and Donald Byrd. While studying for a degree in Music at Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee, he joined doo wop/soul group Phillip And The Faithfuls, who recorded 1964's Love Me for Goldwax Records. He became the Memphis label's in-house keyboardist, backing James Carr, OV Wright, The Ovations and others. He debuted as a solo singer with 1967 45s Have Some Boogaloo and It's My Life. In 1970 he moved to Miami where he taught at the Florida Memorial University and opened Timmy's Lounge, one of the first Black-owned bars in the beach area.

> "People see me as a one-hit wonder... and that's fine by me."
> TIMMY THOMAS

It was at Timmy's that he premiered Why Can't We Live Together. The song garnered such a strong audience response he made a demo which impressed Henry Stone of TK Records, who released it on his Glades imprint.

His 1972 same-titled debut album, his first of four on Glades, hit the US Top 10, and 1973's What Can I Tell Her made the US Top 20. He also appeared on TK recordings by KC And The Sunshine Band, Little Beaver and Betty Wright. When TK went bankrupt in 1981, Thomas's focus shifted to academia, although he continued to record sporadically, most notably with Joss Stone on 2003's *The Soul Sessions* and 2004's *Mind, Body & Soul*. He also regularly played live, citing a 1994 performance of Why Can't We Live Together in South Africa at the invite of Nelson Mandela as a career highlight.

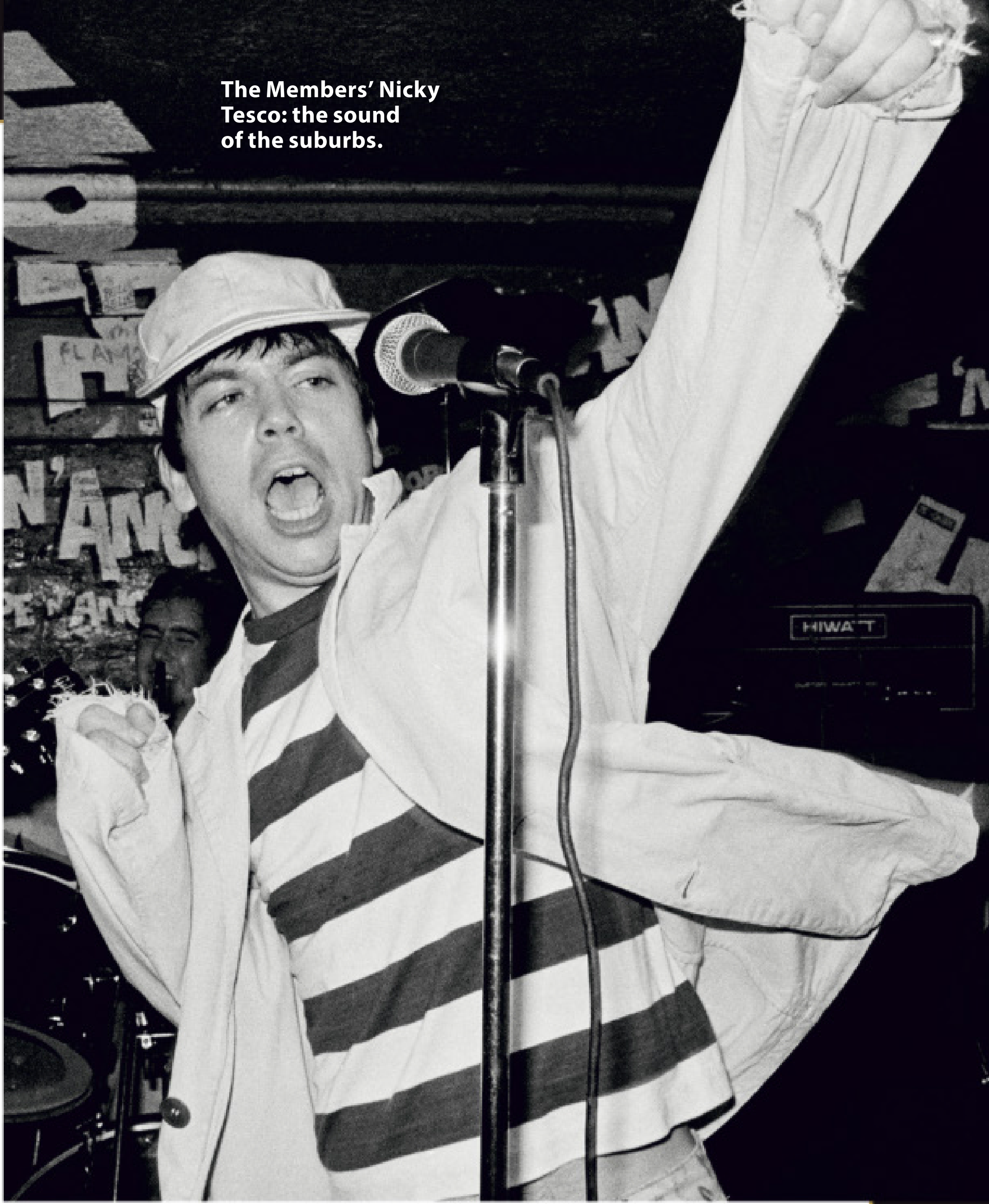
Widely covered by acts including Sade, MC Hammer, Santana, Steve Winwood and, most recently, in 2021 by Lonnie Smith with Iggy Pop on vocals, Why Can't We Live Together was also sampled by Drake on his 2015 US/UK Top 5 hit Hotline Bling. "People see me as a one-hit wonder," said Timmy, "and that's fine by me. What isn't is that the message of my one hit is still current."

Lois Wilson

THE LEGACY

The Album: Timmy Thomas *Why Can't We Live Together* (Glades, 1972)
The Sound: A one-man unit, Thomas never sounded better than on his debut album. The eight self-penned tracks, including that impactful title song and its flip, the minimalist deep cut Funky Me, showcase him best, but covers of songs by Roberta Flack and the Chi-Lites also impress.

Getty


The Members' Nicky Tesco: the sound of the suburbs.

Nicky Tesco

Members frontman

BORN 1955

Born in Belfast to an RAF family, Nick Lightowlers later moved to Camberley in Surrey. After studying politics, and inspired by punk, he decided to form The Members in 1976. His initial *nom de guerre* was Nicky Ritz, but he was persuaded to change it to the supermarket chain by guitarist and co-writer Jean-Marie Carroll. While the metropolitan punk scene originally involved designer clothes and situationism, Peel favourites The Members articulated a spotty, thwarted and arguably realer regional mindset: first single Solitary Confinement had already given voice to the disillusioned city thrill-seeker before March 1979's classic Number 12 hit The Sound Of The Suburbs said it loudest for the bored masses in the sticks. Their last UK hit was April '79's Offshore Banking Business, a skanking critique of financial skulduggery written by ex-merchant bank trainee Carroll, but when they recorded '82's pop-funk *Uprhythm, Downbeat* with Martin Rushent, the group looked set for success in Australia and the US, where one eminent fan was Bruce Springsteen. However, Tesco left after a 1983 tour of America. Two years later he co-wrote Roger Daltrey's 1985 solo single The Pride You Hide, while as an actor he would appear in Aki Kaurismäki's cult 1989 movie Leningrad Cowboys Go America, and also, alongside Joe Strummer, in the director's 1990 film I Hired A Contract Killer. Tesco later worked as a journalist, and took part in a January 2007 live Members reunion to celebrate his wife's birthday (he quipped it was cheaper than buying her a present). Though he appeared on 2009 band single International Financial Crisis, poor health precluded further activities. Tesco remained a lively presence on social media with a keen social and political awareness. Writing in tribute, Carroll saluted his old partner's "charisma and drive that was something very, very special… [he] achieved everything that he wanted in life."

Ian Harrison

THEY ALSO SERVED

ELECTRONIC ARTIST **MIRA CALIX** (above, b.Chantal Passamonte, 1970) worked in the press department at Warp Records, and began her recording life with the label with 1996's Ilanga EP: her electro-acoustic works included LPs, sound installations, theatre scores and internationally-presented public art. Her last album, *absent origin*, was released in November. "She pushed the boundaries between electronic music, classical music and art in a truly unique way," said Warp.

FOLK SINGER-SONGWRITER **PETE ST. JOHN** (B.1932) spent time in North America before returning home to Dublin in the '70s. He would reflect upon the changes the city had undergone in story and portrait songs tinged with nostalgia and loss: The Rare Ould Times became an Irish standard recorded by The Dubliners among many others, while the ballad The Fields Of Athenry has been adopted as an Irish football and rugby anthem.

BASSIST **BERT RUITER** (b.1946) joined Amsterdam's yodelling prog rockers **Focus** in 1971, playing on 1973's US Top 10 and UK Number 20 hit Hocus Pocus, and UK Number 4 hit Sylvia. He appeared on all Focus LPs from *Focus 3* to *Focus Con Proby*; after the group's split in 1978, he played with Dutch hitmakers **Earth And Fire**, worked as a producer and songwriter, and took part in Focus reunions.

VOCALIST AND PERCUSSIONIST **DEREK HUSSEY** (right, b.1957) – also known as 'Derek The Draw' – worked in film effects before assuming the role of Ian Dury's minder. After Dury's death in 2000, the 'Bona Fide Geezer' took over as vocalist for **The Blockheads**, playing live and appearing on the re-formed group's albums including 2003's *Where's The Party* and 2017's *Beyond The Call Of Dury*.

GEORGIA GUITARIST **BARRY BAILEY** (b.1948) was a founder player with the **Atlanta Rhythm Section**. Formed in 1970, they hit biggest with 1978's US Top 10 *Champagne Jam*, and had six US Top 30 singles. They also played the White House lawn at the request of President Jimmy Carter. Suffering from MS, Bailey retired from the band in 2006.

COMPOSER **PHILIP JECK** (b.1952) was alerted to the possibilities of turntablism after attending NY's clubs in the late '70s, and began creating his own ghostly, looped "sound with record-players" in the early '80s. Also a visual artist, he created soundtracks for the stage and art installations, and released 11 solo LPs, many on the Touch label. His collaborators included **Jah Wobble**, **Jaki Liebezeit**, **David Sylvian** and **Gavin Bryars**.

BALTIMORE JAZZ PIANIST **JESSICA WILLIAMS** (b.1948) showed unusual musical talent from a young age and was said to have had a synaesthesiac's ability to see music in colour. As a teenager, she collaborated with drummer **Philly Joe Jones** in New Jersey, before moving to the West Coast in 1976, where she played with **Dexter Gordon**, **Stan Getz** and others. A virtuoso, prolific player who often utilised electronics, her releases *Nothin' But The Truth* (1986) and *Live At Yoshi's Vol. 1* (2004) were both Grammy-nominated.

A&R MAN **CALVIN MARK LEE** (b.1937) met **David Bowie** in London in 1967 while working as head of promotions for Mercury Records. Instrumental in getting him signed, he also introduced Bowie to future wife Angie, wore a light-reflecting plastic bindi on his forehead (inspiring Ziggy's frontal-lobe "astral sphere"), lent Major Tom his silver jacket and called Space Oddity "a real trip!" in his press release. Lee also held a doctorate in pharmacology from the University of Berkeley in California.

GUITARIST **MIKE CROSS** (b.1965) co-founded Detroit rockers **Sponge** in 1992. Heavy but not abrasive, they were ripe for alt-rock radio play, and 1996 LP *Wax Ecstatic* yielded two US Top 20 hits before the band departed Columbia for 1999's *New Pop Sunday*. Mike and his bassist brother Tim both left the group in 2001, but re-joined for a good-natured reunion at the 2018 Detroit Music Awards. In 2021, Cross's most recent band, MC Roads, released an EP entitled No Nostalgia.

JOURNALIST **GAVIN MARTIN** (b.1961) was a fearless free spirit, even by the standards of the music press in the late 20th century. A teenage fanzine editor in his native Belfast, he joined NME in 1980, a singular, questing and vivid voice unswayed by fashion or consensus opinion. At NME, Uncut, and the Daily Mirror, he wrote passionately and incisively about a wide range of music. Courageously, too; his heroes – most notably Van Morrison – were never above his criticism, or unstinting moral rigour.

PIONEERING **MC SKIBADEE** (below, b.1975) was a fast-chatting British Jungle MC who started out on pirate radio and became a familiar voice at live drum & bass events. He collaborated with **MC Det** on the hip-hop/Jungle 2 x Freestyle project, appeared on **Dillinja**'s Top 40 single Twist 'Em Out in 2003, and worked with D&B tag team SaSaSaS: his other collaborators included **Bryan G**, **DJ Hype**, **Shy FX** and **T-Power**. Goldie hailed him as "one of the greatest to ever do it."

Jenny Bulley, Ian Harrison and John Mulvey

Jana Chiellino, Getty (2), Shutterstock

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Another brick for the Gauls: (clockwise from above) Gendarmes man the barricades; street-burning homme; Jacques Dutronc wigs out; Paris residents Aphrodite's Child; Mick Jagger: "It was a strange time"; Dominique Grange's 'Mao folk' 45; post-protests burn-out.

MAY 1968

...Paris riots – and rolls

MAY 2 It was a year of taking to the streets. In March, thousands of protesters against the Vietnam war clashed with police outside the US Embassy in London's Grosvenor Square. Later, in August, similar scenes at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago turned uglier still, with the cops-vs-peacenik riot dubbed "The Battle Of Michigan Avenue" broadcast live on TV, and Phil Ochs inspiring young men to burn their draft cards by singing I Ain't Marching Any More.

But the real action was taking place in Paris, where on May 2, seven weeks of strikes and civil disobedience against capitalism, sclerotic government and ultimately all social restrictions began after a clampdown on disaffected students at Paris X Nanterre University. On May 10, thousands of students marched on the Latin Quarter: the police moved in, paving stones were hurled, fires were set, tear gas was used, and hundreds were arrested. As the weeks went on, an alliance of students, communists and striking underpaid workers united against the government of President Charles de Gaulle.

So soon after the Summer of Love, real revolution was in the air. The frisson was enhanced by the political-philosophical slogans of the Situationist International group graffitied across the urban theatre – 'Be Realistic, Demand The Impossible' was one. Also ubiquitous were the striking agitprop posters of anonymous guerrilla designers the Atelier Populaire, such as a cobble-chucking female rioter with the slogan, 'Beauty Is In The Streets'.

Inevitably, there were musical responses. Mick Jagger, who'd been present at Grosvenor Square, was moved to rewrite new Stones song Did Everybody Pay Their Dues?, and the group duly recorded Street Fighting Man at an Olympic Studios session in the third week of May. "It was a very strange time in France," he told Rolling Stone in 1995. "There was all this violence going on. I mean, they almost toppled the government… [Paris] was a direct inspiration because, by contrast, London was very quiet."

There were other musical reverberations closer to home. Jacques Dutronc's recent Number 1 Il Est Cinq Heures, Paris S'éveille was dropped from radio playlists after it was adopted by demonstrators. The song would be reinterpreted by Jacques Le Glou, who rewrote the lyrics to better articulate the 'soixante-huitard' perspective: "Cops drop dead on street corners… the bureaucrats exterminated." Another real-time response popular on the street was Crève Salope, the first authority-questioning composition by chansonnier Renaud, written when he was just 16. Dominique Grange's 'Mao folk' 45 Nous Sommes Les Nouveaux Partisans, meanwhile, came with a wrench-wielding mob on the sleeve.

> **"There was all this violence… they almost toppled the government."**
> **MICK JAGGER**

In Germany, then split into capitalist West and communist East, the attempted assassination of student leader Rudi Dutschke in April led to further outbreaks of '68 fever, catalysing new musical forces ripe for emergence. Can's drummer Jaki Liebezeit told biographer Rob Young: "we got the spirit in 1968… students, new things came. Traditional feelings were finished." The group's June '68 performance later released as *Prehistoric Future* featured field recordings of demonstrators chanting on the Paris streets taped by flautist David Johnson.

Can didn't know it at the time, but their soon-to-be vocalist Malcolm Mooney was also in Paris, struck by the city's machine gun-toting lawmen. Other temporary residents were baroque pop trio Aphrodite's Child, who'd fled dictatorial Greece and signed a deal in Paris. In 1972, keyboardist Vangelis released the sonic portrait of May 1968 *Fais Que Ton Rêve Soit Plus Long Que La Nuit*, or, *Make Your Dream Longer Than The Night*, a Situationist phrase.

In time, Bob Stanley has argued, the revolutionary tumult liberated French pop from yé-yé and the EP format, allowing Anglo-American rock and increasingly serious lyrics into the equation, manifesting on LPs

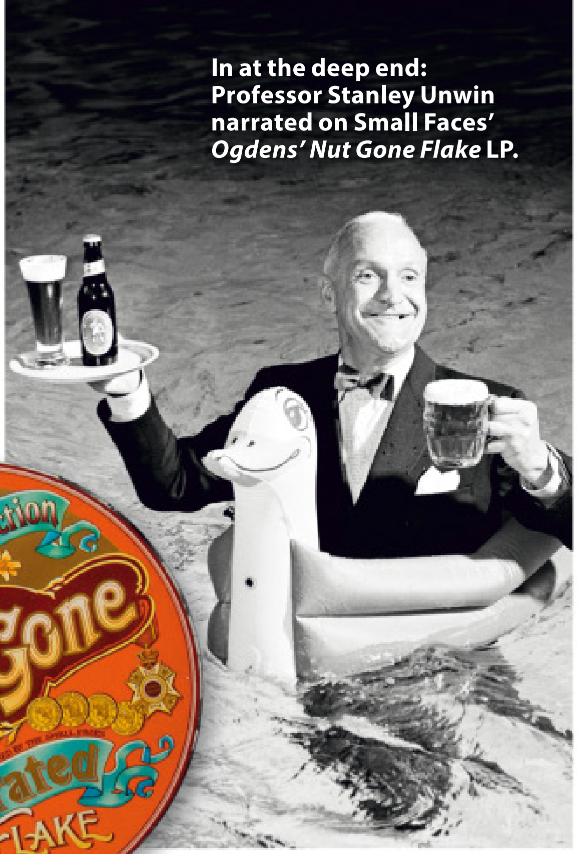
Getty (7), Alamy (2), Shutterstock

such as Michel Polnareff's *Polnareff's* and Serge Gainsbourg's *Histoire De Melody Nelson* (both 1971). Other LPs of the period included Léo Ferré's albums *L'Été 68* (1969) and *Il N'y A Plus Rien* (1973), the latter articulating the disappointment that, after government offers of higher wages and new elections, the revolutionary spirit was nullified: "Under the cobblestones," he sang, "there is no longer the beach."

Yet May '68 would cast a longer shadow. That month two students, Malcolm McLaren and Jamie Reid, occupied the Croydon Art College in sympathy. From 1975, McLaren would employ the subversive Situationist method of *Détournement* as manager of the Sex Pistols, while Reid handled the artwork. Situationist ideas also permeated Manchester's Factory label, including the naming of the Haçienda club and the sandpaper sleeve of *The Return Of The Durutti Column* LP. In 1989, the cover of The Stone Roses' debut LP featured a French tricolour and lemons, which Paris rioters used as antidotes to tear gas, while its song Bye Bye Badman was an explicit tribute to May '68.

"[It] excited us all over here no end and we tried in our own way to pay homage," reflected McLaren in 1989. "We were all left with thinking, 'How are we going to redesign our lives?'" Or, as the graffiti artists of Paris '68 would pose this vital conundrum, "No forbidding allowed – boredom is counter-revolutionary."

Ian Harrison



In at the deep end: Professor Stanley Unwin narrated on Small Faces' *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake* LP.

Small Faces peak!

MAY 14 Small Faces' Lazy Sunday reaches its singles chart zenith of Number 2. *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake*, the last LP recorded by the group's original line-up, is released on May 24. An advert parodying the Lord's Prayer ("Give us thy album in a round cover as we give thee 37/9d… For nice is the music/The sleeve and the story") causes controversy, but the album goes on to spend six weeks at Number 1 over the summer. However, the record proves practically impossible to perform live, though they do play a selection of songs on BBC2's Colour Me Pop on June 21 with side two's guest narrator, Professor Stanley Unwin.

Core values: Lennon and McCartney announce their "kind of Western communism."

Fabs talk Apple Corps in NYC

MAY 14 At a press conference at New York's Americana Hotel, John Lennon and Paul McCartney announce the US launch of Apple Corps, their music, film, retail, publishing and electronics division. They promise a utopian affair which McCartney likens to "a kind of Western communism." He also refers to the inventions of Apple insider Magic Alex, who he calls a "genius", while an Apple school and radio operation are also mentioned. "Business and pleasure might be feasible," offers Lennon. Pressed for thoughts on the Paris riots, they remain non-committal – "no one knows," says Paul. The Beatles start recording Revolution on May 30 at EMI Studios, when sessions begin for *The White Album*.

ALSO ON!

HORSIN' AROUND

9 **Jacky** (above) performs her TV theme hit White Horses on Top Of The Pops: it peaks at 10 later in the month. The Dublin vocalist also sang on Green, Green Grass Of Home by Tom Jones and Hey Joe by Hendrix.

78 CRASH

18 It's reported the **Reprise** label is to inaugurate a new 10-inch 78 rpm range with **Randy Newman**'s The Beehive State. No-one bites and the '78 R.P.M. Speed Series' is discontinued.

MIAMI NICE

18 The **1968 Pop And Underground Festival** takes place near Miami, Florida. Acts include **The Jimi Hendrix Experience**, **The Mothers Of Invention** and **Chuck Berry**. The second day's rain inspires Hendrix to pen Rainy Day, Dream Away.

ADIEU, LITTLE WILLIE

26 Singer **Little Willie John**, who enjoyed US R&B hits in the '50s including the first recording of Fever in 1956, dies in Washington State Penitentiary. He'd been serving time for manslaughter.

YARDBIRDS FLY OFF

31 At LA's Shrine Exposition Hall, **The Yardbirds**, with Jimmy Page *and* Jeff Beck, cover Smokestack Lightning and **Velvet Underground**'s I'm Waiting For The Man. The group split a week later.

TOP TEN

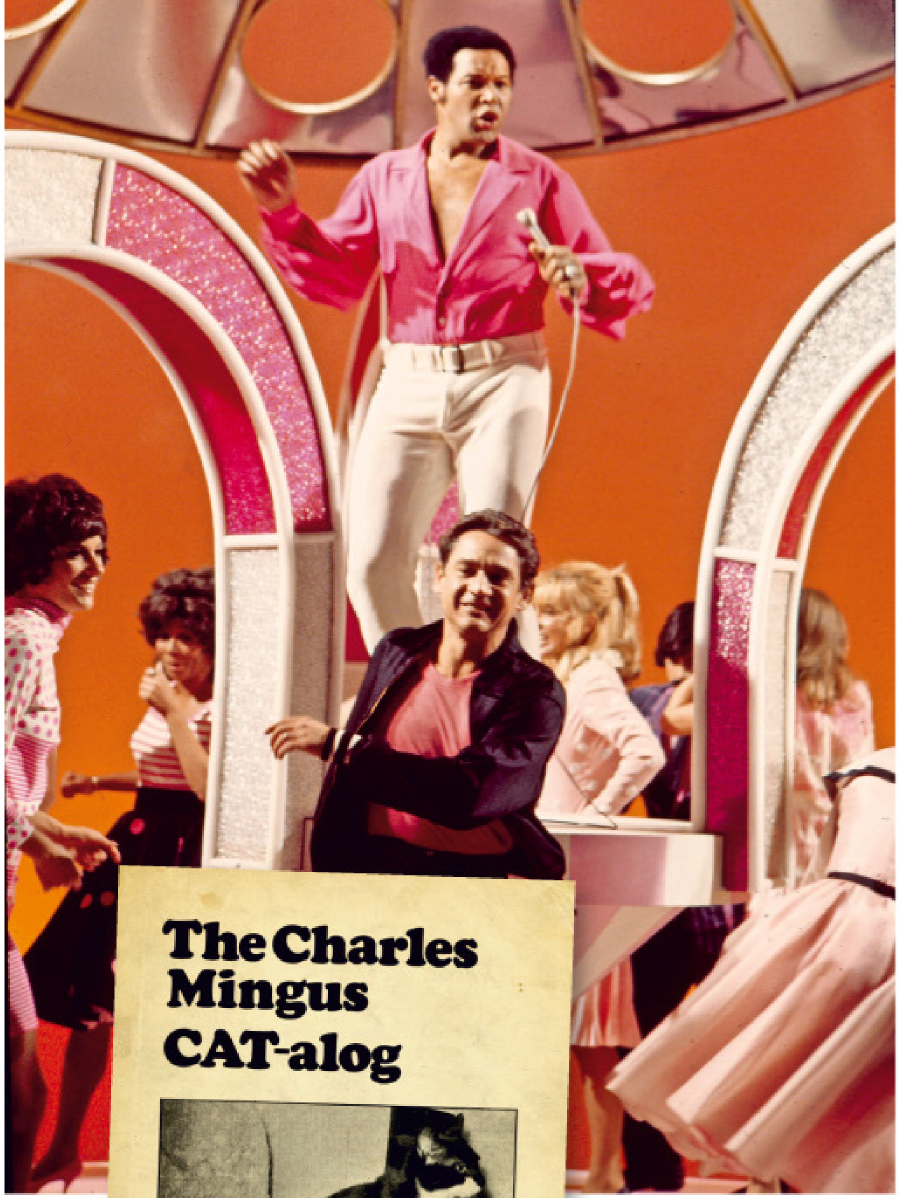
MALAYSIA SINGLES MAY 18

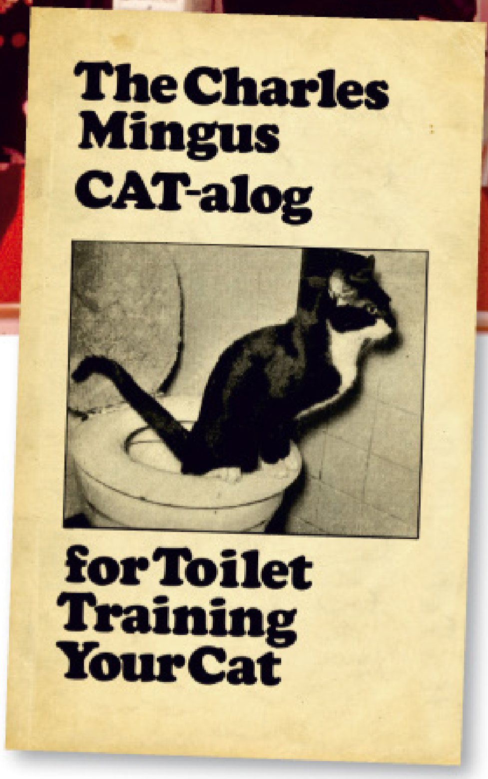
1. **EVERLASTING LOVE** THE LOVE AFFAIR CBS
2. **KISS ME GOODBYE** PETULA CLARK PYE
3. **LOVE IS BLUE (L'AMOUR EST BLEU)** PAUL MAURIAT PHILIPS
4. **THE LEGEND OF XANADU** DAVE DEE, DOZY, BEAKY, MICK & TICH FONTANA
5. **SIMON SAYS** 1910 FRUITGUM CO. PYE
6. **FIRE BRIGADE** THE MOVE REGAL ZONOPHONE
7. **LADY MADONNA** THE BEATLES PARLOPHONE
8. **U.S. MALE** ELVIS PRESLEY RCA
9. **QUITE RIGHTLY SO** PROCOL HARUM REGAL ZONOPHONE
10. **AM I THAT EASY TO FORGET** ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK DECCA

Peck of the pops: Petula Clark at Number 2.

AD ARCHIVE 1968

Attention, junior hot rodders: turn the living room into a racetrack with Hot Wheels' fantasy cars. (Why can't actual motorways be orange?)





The odd couplings: (anti-clockwise from top left) give pie-and-peas a chance – Elton John (top) and heavy metallers Saxon teamed up in 1986; late-period Sinatra wigs out; Charlie Mingus's feline toilet training guide; Chubby Checker goes Aquarian.

Who was in the studio next door?

Time to deal with this month's tricky rock **brain-teasers**, puzzling **mysteries** and uncanny **enigmas**.

Further to Ask MOJO letters about unlikely pairings: what about cases of musicians who happened to be in the next studio who came in and helped other bands out, like when Paul McCartney crunched a carrot on Super Furry Animals' 2001 song Receptacle For The Respectable?

Colin Anderson, via e-mail

MOJO says: Actually, the Macca/SFA team-up – a homage to Paul's reputed contribution to The Beach Boys' Vegetables in '67 – apparently took six months of negotiation, but we get your drift. Getting the player next door involved is a real thing, with probably the most remarkable instance being when Bob Dylan and Johnny Cash were both in CBS Studios in Nashville in February 1969, and promptly recorded two days' worth of widely-bootlegged duets, now available officially on the *Travelin' Thru Bootleg Series*. Peculiar combinations also inevitably occur, as when Wisseloord Studios neighbour Elton John played on 1986 tracks Northern Lady and Party 'Til You Puke by Barnsley metallers Saxon, or when Stephen Stills sat in on percussion on the Bee Gees' You Should Be Dancing at Miami's Criteria studio in 1976, later observing to The Independent that he'd still be living in the Surrey house he bought off Ringo Starr "if I'd got royalties." Queen's Roger Taylor providing BVs for Kansas' 1982 Christian rock LP *Vinyl Confessions*, recorded at Hollywood's Chateau Recorders, also counts. The examples roll on, with some tasty examples being a convenient Jesus And Mary Chain chanting the word "guilty" on Erasure's 1989 single Drama! at London's Church studio; a passing Errol Brown obliging Lauren Laverne's band Kenickie with a spoken-word intro for their cover of Hot Chocolate's It Started With A Kiss in 1998 ("we popped him a note," she recalled) or Simple Minds being roped into a choir including Bowie for Play It Safe on Iggy Pop's 1980 LP *Soldier*, at Rockfield. One sadly unused team-up, as depicted in Bobby Gillespie's memoir Tenement Kid, involved King Crimson's Robert going full Fripper-tronic at Abbey Road on Primal Scream's 1987 single Imperial, but you can't have everything.

WHO FLIPPED FROM R&B TO PSYCH?

MOJO's turned me on to lots of great LPs over the years, one of the wildest being Eric Burdon & The Animals' tripped-out 1967 album *Winds Of Change*. What are other good examples of R&B players of a previous generation going psychedelic?

Steve Woodward, via e-mail

MOJO says: Your starter for three: ex-Animal Hilton Valentine's 1969 folky LP *All In Your Head* (sample sleeve poem: "A cup is too much, it looks like a cup"), Zoot Money's 1969 album *Welcome To My Head* (sample freakout: Eight Is The Colour) and arguably the daddy of them all, Chubby Checker's loopy yet sincere 1971 LP of acid rock, which has appeared under several titles including *New Revelation* and *Chequered!*. How can you resist titles like Stoned In The Bathroom, My Mind Comes From A High Place and Love Tunnel? Please let us know your faves, fellow astral travellers.

WHERE'S BOLAN'S TAPE?

I first read in Sounds in 1981 that among forth-coming Marc Bolan releases was a rehearsal tape for *My People Were Fair…* recorded in Tony Visconti's flat a few days before they went into the studio. I last heard that Visconti planned to release this tape in 2015. Is there any news on this please?

Mike Clarke, via e-mail

MOJO says: We asked Marc expert Mark Paytress who says Visconti played him extracts from the tape in 1992 when he first interviewed him for his biography Bolan: The Rise And Fall Of A 20th Century Superstar. He adds that he and Universal have contacted Visconti about releasing the full set recorded on 2-track at Visconti's flat in Lexham Gardens, Earl's Court, and that the producer did provide a pair of tracks for the *20th Century Superstar* box set in 2002. "We're still living in hope," says Mark. "It's ace stuff!"

ROCK SIDE HUSTLES REVISITED

Re: Ask MOJO 341's consideration of musicians' non-musical side gigs. I'm not sure you can top the 1972 pamphlet The Charles Mingus CAT-alog For Toilet Training Your Cat, where the great jazz double bassist shares the secrets of how he hipped his cat Nightlife to live without the litter tray.

David Houseman, via e-mail

MOJO says: The next time a cat needs naming, Nightlife shall be his handle. And thanks to readers for reminding us that Slapp Happy's Peter Blegvad draws graphic novels, Pretenders drummer Martin Chambers used to be a driving instructor and modernist composer Charles Ives had a day job as an insurance salesman.

HELP MOJO

Recording's been long-distance and online for years now, but what was the first album recorded via ISDN?

Chris Norton, via e-mail

MOJO says: The Audio Engineering Society in New York cites 1993's Phil Ramone-produced Frank Sinatra album *Duets*, when the Chairman remotely recorded team-ups with Aretha Franklin, Barbra Streisand, Bono and others. The studio-standard technology, however, was available way back in 1990. Can anyone out there beat Sinatra?

CONTACT MOJO

Have you got a challenging musical question for the MOJO Brains Trust? E-mail **askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk** and we'll help untangle your trickiest puzzles.

Getty (3), Shutterstock

Cranium Rock!

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Worth £79 RRP, we have FIVE sets of Orange O Bones® to give away. Be in it to win it by completing this month's crossword and send a scan of it to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk, making sure to type CROSSWORD 343 in the subject line. Entries without that subject line will not be considered. Please include your home address, e-mail and phone number. The closing date for entries is **June 2**. For the rules of the quiz, see www.mojo4music.com. And it's auf wiedersehen to cross-word-compiler Michael Jones, whose swan song this is. Thanks, Michael!

See www.orangeamps.com/product/o-bones/ for more info.

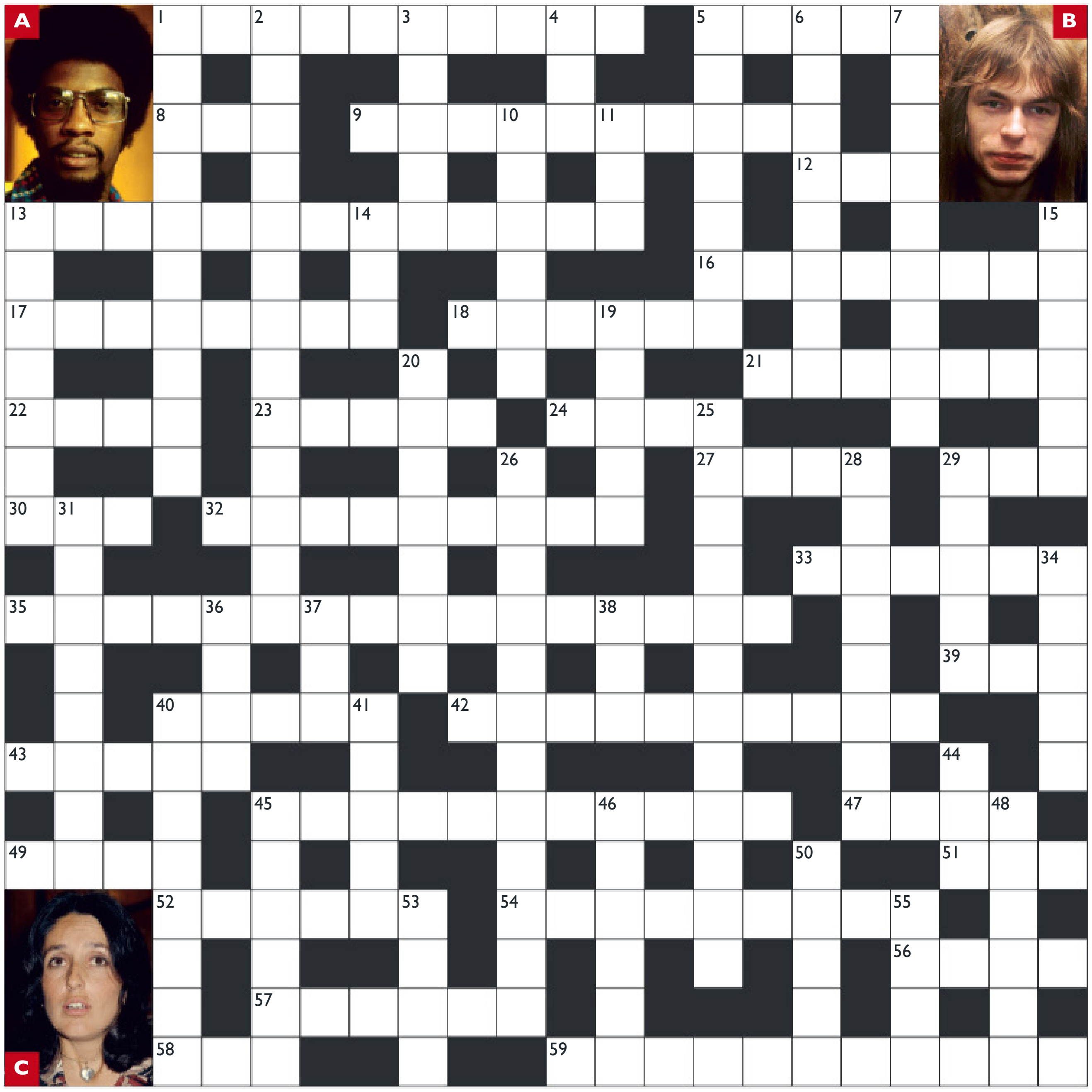
ANSWERS

MOJO 341

Across: 8 U-Roy, 9 Françoise Hardy, 11 Gilbert, 14 Pablo, 15 Fat, 17 Go Let It Out, 20 Public Image, 21 Zappa, 23 Kele, 25 No No No, 26 Begin, 29 Michael, 30 Evil Woman, 32 Elbow, 35 Laid, 36 Kim, 38 Neko, 40 Manassas, 41 TSOL, 42 Badlands, 45 Dave Clark, 46 Stan, 47 Nile, 49 Isobel, 52 Tracy, 54 New York, 55 Local Hero, 59 Sónar, 60 Tago Mago, 61 Cat Power, 62 Pylon.

Down: 1 Hung Up, 2 Cool, 3 Brit, 4 Robbie Robertson, 5 Phillips, 6 Drift, 7 Wyatt, 10 Smog, 12 Billy Idol, 13 Ricky, 14 Pharoah Sanders, 16 Air, 18 Over, 19 Thelonious Monk, 21 Zoo, 22 Asylum, 24 Deal, 27 Windmill, 28 John Barleycorn, 31 Vek, 32 Earth, 33 War, 34 Coast To Coast, 37 Ira, 39 Monaco, 42 Bong, 43 Dancehall, 44 Jewel, 48 Ure, 50 Lost, 51 Canon, 52 Three, 53 Art, 56 Cop, 57 Law, 58 Hoop.

Winner: Fintan Murray from **Belfast** wins a pair of Meze Audio LIRIC headphones (341 Crossword).



Getty (3)

ACROSS

1 Pioneering female guitarist who was known as Lady Bo (5,5)
5 Blues label established in 1950 (5)
8 What 3 Down put on canvas (3)
9 Landmark post-rock release that was the second LP by Slint (10)
12 Martin, who was half of Suicide (3)
13 See photoclue A (6,7)
16 Type of zither played by Mother Maybelle Carter and Polly Harvey (8)
17 Avant-trio formed in '70s Camberwell known for their use of tape loops (4,4)
18 What to call Steely Dan's *Blues* (6)
21 Michael Jackson was off it (3,4)
22 Folk-singing son of Guthrie (4)
23 Rick, Def Jam founder and super-producer (5)
24 It's whom Laura Nyro wanted to cradle in Stoney End (4)
27 Giant ---- (4)
29 Portishead's ABBA cover (1.1.1.)
30 Carly Simon album – a few years after he loved her? (3)
32 Time that Ringo reunited with Paul (3,6)
33 This prog act had an album that was half live anyway (6)
35 Mexican guitarists Sánchez and Quintero (7,1,8)
39 Archie Bronson Outfit's debut (3)
40 Elmore, the King of the Slide Guitar (5)
42 It links Horace Andy and XTC (10)
43 Britt Daniel and Jim Eno have been their two constant members (5)
45 Alt-country star whose band is the 400 Unit (5,6)
47 ---- Esteem, AKA Rebecca Lucy Taylor (4)
49 Rick, member of 10cc (4)
51 Blom sibling whose band are on a *Welcome Break* (3)
52 English jazz trumpeter and in-demand session musician Guy (6)
54 His album from last year was *Seeking New Gods* (5,4)
56 The state of these Saints! (4)
57 Pete Townshend box set celebrating Meher Baba (6)
58 --- *Arcade* (Hüsker Dü album) (3)
59 Song worried the council might "raise the parking rate." (3,5,3)

DOWN

1 US singer who wrote and recorded Poetry Man (6,4)
2 Dutch band whose only UK hit was Radar Love (6,7)
3 Sylvian, Karn, Jansen, Dean & Barbieri (5)
4 Smashing Pumpkins' organ? (3)
5 Roger, who fronted 33 Across (7)
6 The Sisters Of Mercy's Andrew (8)
7 See photoclue B (5,4)
10 Could be the sounds of bagpipes or an album by Muse (6)
11 Mickie Most's London studios (3)
13 Captain Beefheart supplied the only vocals on this Frank Zappa album (3,4)
14 Alto sax legend Pepper (3)
15 Dan Taylor and Simeon made *Contact* as Silver ------ (6)
19 Gene, Petula or Annie? (5)
20 It opens Elbow's *Cast Of Thousands* (7)
25 The 11-minute epic on Fairport's *Unhalfbricking* (1,7,4)
26 His memoir was called Set The Night On Fire (5,7)
28 Hit for Rihanna, Herb Alpert and Jet Harris and Tony Meehan! (8)
29 Label that released Ian Dury, Madness and Rachel Sweet (5)
31 They went on *Pointless Walks To Dismal Places* (8)
34 The White Stripes' Hotel (5)
36 Middle name of a certain George Morrison (4)
37 "Now the world is gone, I'm just…" (3)
38 --- Wind, who had psychedelic *Flashes* (3)
40 See photoclue C (4,4)
41 ----- Q (Dale Hawkins song) (5)
44 Keith, Greg & Carl initially (1.1.1.)
45 Lonnie, who is War's only permanent member (6)
46 Savage track by New Order found on The Beach (6)
48 Brotherhood Of Man hit mentioned in Bohemian Rhapsody (6)
50 It could be Wild, Good or Kool in different song titles (5)
53 Julian Cope LP series of cosmic jams (4)
55 Paul Weller's Peacock clothes (4)

Stardust memories: Ava Cherry and Bowie during filming of The 1980 Floor Show, Marquee Club, London, October 1973.

Ava Cherry and David Bowie

Creative and personal harmony blossomed in NY. Then managerial tumult and craziness split them asunder.

HELLO SEPTEMBER 1972

I'd moved to New York. My boyfriend had a hair salon, and he said, "Would you wear your hair short and dye it platinum blonde for the New York Times?" I said, "Yeah!"

I had this manager, who'd given me this album, *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars* by this guy from Britain named David Bowie, and I was just going nuts over it. A month or so later, David was playing the Carnegie Hall. I was friends with Stevie Wonder who was doing the Apollo the same night, and he gave a party afterwards at this really upscale club called Genesis, where I was working. The who's who of R&B is there, and all of a sudden, my manager comes running over to me and says, "David Bowie's here, I'm gonna introduce you to him!" I was totally freaked out. He comes over in his electric blue suit and the red Ziggy hair, kisses my hand and he goes, "Very nice to meet you, Ava, I love your hair."

Everybody's in the room singing, and I was singing too. David said, "You're a singer? You might want to work on this project I'm working on, I'm going to Japan in a couple of months. Could you meet me tomorrow at RCA? You might have to do a little audition." Then he says, "Let's have dinner tonight." We went to see Thelonious Monk. He was staying at the Gramercy Park Hotel. That's how it began, you know? I just fell hopelessly in love.

I changed my whole life, I quit my job, got rid of my apartment and said goodbye to my parents in Chicago, where I get this telegram saying, "We're so sorry, David got sick and we had to cancel the tour, we'll reach out to you in the future."

I said to my mother, "I got to go find him." First I went to Monte Carlo, then Paris, where I stayed for eight months looking for him. One night I was in this bar when I hear this guy say David Bowie is in this club called Castel right across the street. So I go running over there and see Stuey [George], David's bodyguard. We walked over to David, who was talking to this woman dripping in diamonds, and he looks over at me and goes, "Oh my god, Ava. What are you doing here?" I said, "I came to find you. You couldn't just leave me like that." He told me to sit down next to him, and then he goes, "Let's go."

"I said, You couldn't just leave me like that."
AVA CHERRY

GOODBYE SPRING 1975

We'd done the 1980 Floor Show, Earl's Court, found a soul band [for 1975's *Young Americans*]… Luther [Vandross] contributed such incredible work. I wish that it had been a time with cell phones, I would have had a million pictures.

Then there started being a buzz that all this money was gone and that he was broke, and, finally, he told me that it was true. We were in the middle of doing the Astronettes record, just demos, and he said, "We have to stop the record right now, we'll restart it after all this is over with. I've got to go to LA, I've got to get a new manager…"

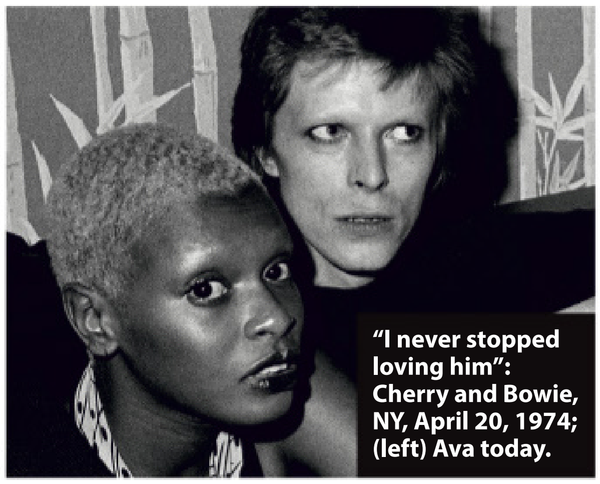
It was the worst time. Then the phone rings and it's my girlfriend, Claudia Jennings, the coolest bitch on the planet. I was crying, saying, "David is getting ready to leave me, I'm on my own in New York." She said, "We're going to Jamaica." A month later we go back to LA. David came – with his suitcases. Claudia calls Robert Wagner and Natalie Wood, friends of hers, and we stayed in their apartment in Century City for a month and a half.

It was a crazy time. David was dealing with Kenneth Anger and all these crazy people in Hollywood, and there was all this stuff going on about mysticism and witchcraft. Cocaine was flying everywhere and people were just not in their own minds. I noticed that David was pensive, and a couple of times, very emotional. One day, he just took his leave of us – he was like, "OK, I've got to go somewhere else," packed his bags and left. That was that, the end, more or less. Claudia said to me, "Let him go, otherwise you're just gonna drive yourself mad." I think I would have fallen apart if I hadn't had her.

I never stopped loving him. You know, you can love more than one person in your life and I'm glad that, in Iman, he found somebody he loved so much. But I had to pick up the pieces and be Ava Cherry in my own right and do it on my own, which I did. You know, I had the chutzpah, and he knew I had the chutzpah.

As told to Ian Harrison

All That Glitters: The Ava Cherry Story is published by Aquarium Press. She plays Opium at the Dublin Bowie Festival on April 22.



"I never stopped loving him": Cherry and Bowie, NY, April 20, 1974; (left) Ava today.

Getty, Bob Gruen

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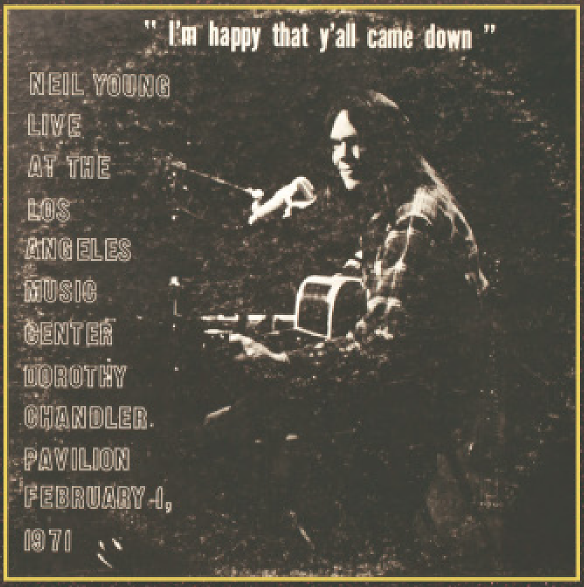

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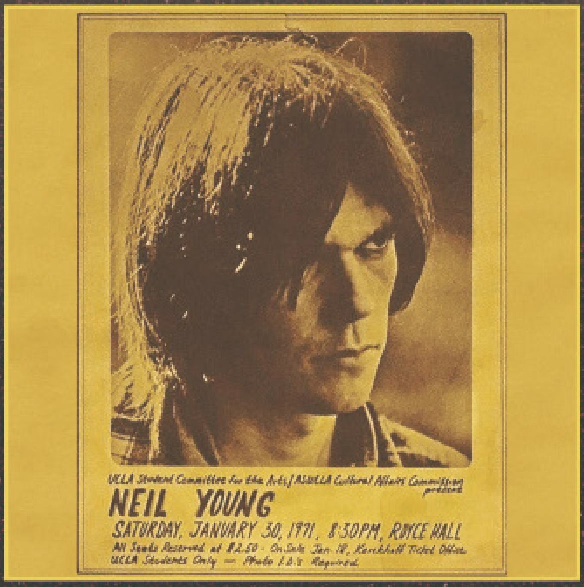

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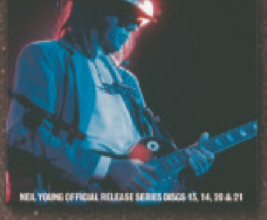

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